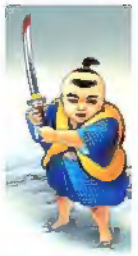
The legend of Lone Wolf and Cub continues to grow, chronicling the wanderings of a cunning assassin and his infant son during the deadliest era of feudal Japan. In this volume, the Lone Wolf battles the most dangerous killer in the countryside, foils the plans of a deceptive gambling troupe, tricks an evil lord into exposing his weak underbelly, and pits himself against the Shogun's deadly ninja! In print for decades in its native Japan, the basis of numerous popular Japanese films, and the inspiration of writers and artists worldwide, *Lone Wolf and Cub* is undeniably a masterpiece of graphic storytelling.

"Period authenticity and pure artistry (combined with) bizarre and moving studies of human nature and the bond between parent and child...it's a dream come true!"

— *Animerica* online

Published for the first time in America in the Japanese format.



LONE WOLF AND CUB

KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

LONE WOLF AND CUB

Front cover illustration by FRANK MILLER *and* LYNN VARLEY

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VOLUME 6

LANTERNS FOR THE DEAD

By KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

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DANA LEWIS

lettering & retouch
DIGITAL CHAMELEON

cover artwork
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LANTERNS FOR THE DEAD

子連れ狼

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA

VOLUME

6

A NOTE TO READERS

Lone Wolf and Cub is famous for its carefully researched re-creation of Edo-Period Japan. To preserve the flavor of the work, we have chosen to retain many Edo-Period terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Japanese is written in a mix of Chinese ideograms and a syllabic writing system, resulting in numerous synonyms. In the glossary, you may encounter words with multiple meanings. These are words written with Chinese ideograms that are pronounced the same but carry different meanings. A Japanese reader seeing the different ideograms would know instantly which meaning it is, but these synonyms can cause confusion when Japanese is spelled out in our alphabet. *O-yurushi o* (please forgive us)!

LONE WOLF AND CUB

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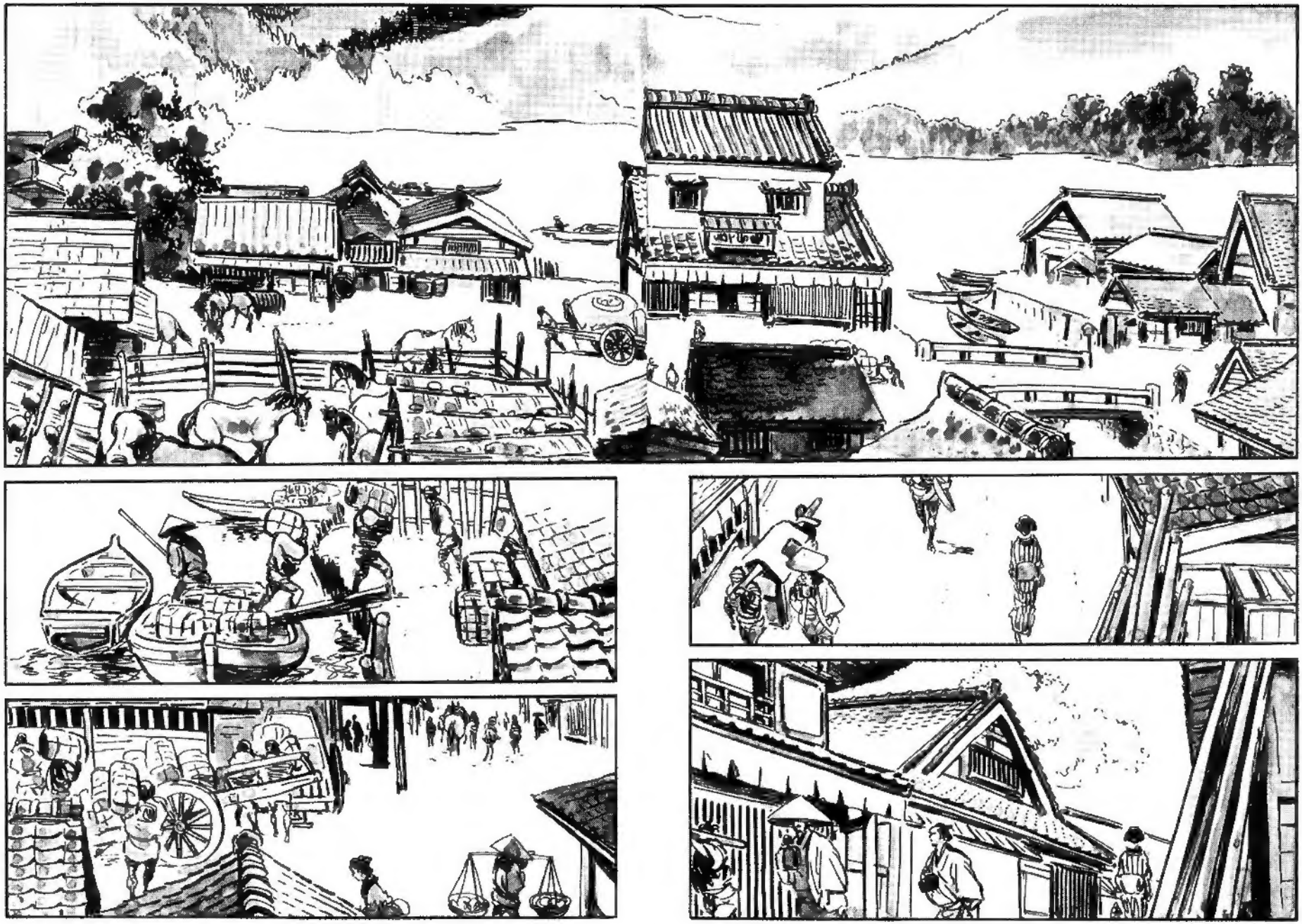
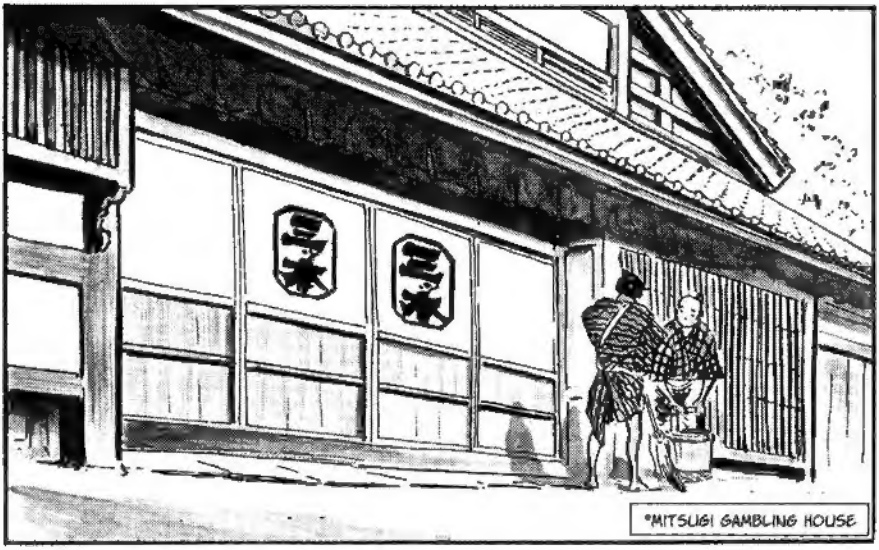



*MITSUGI GAMBLING HOUSE

YOU GOT THAT? YAKUZA GO ON TWO KINDS OF TRIPS, A RAKUTABI AND AN ISOGITABI. THE RAKUTABI'S FOR TRAINING...
BUT AN ISOGITABI, THAT'S THAT FAMOUS KYŌJŌ-MOCHI ROADTRIP, WHEN YOU'RE ON THE RUN...
UH-HUH, UH-HUH.

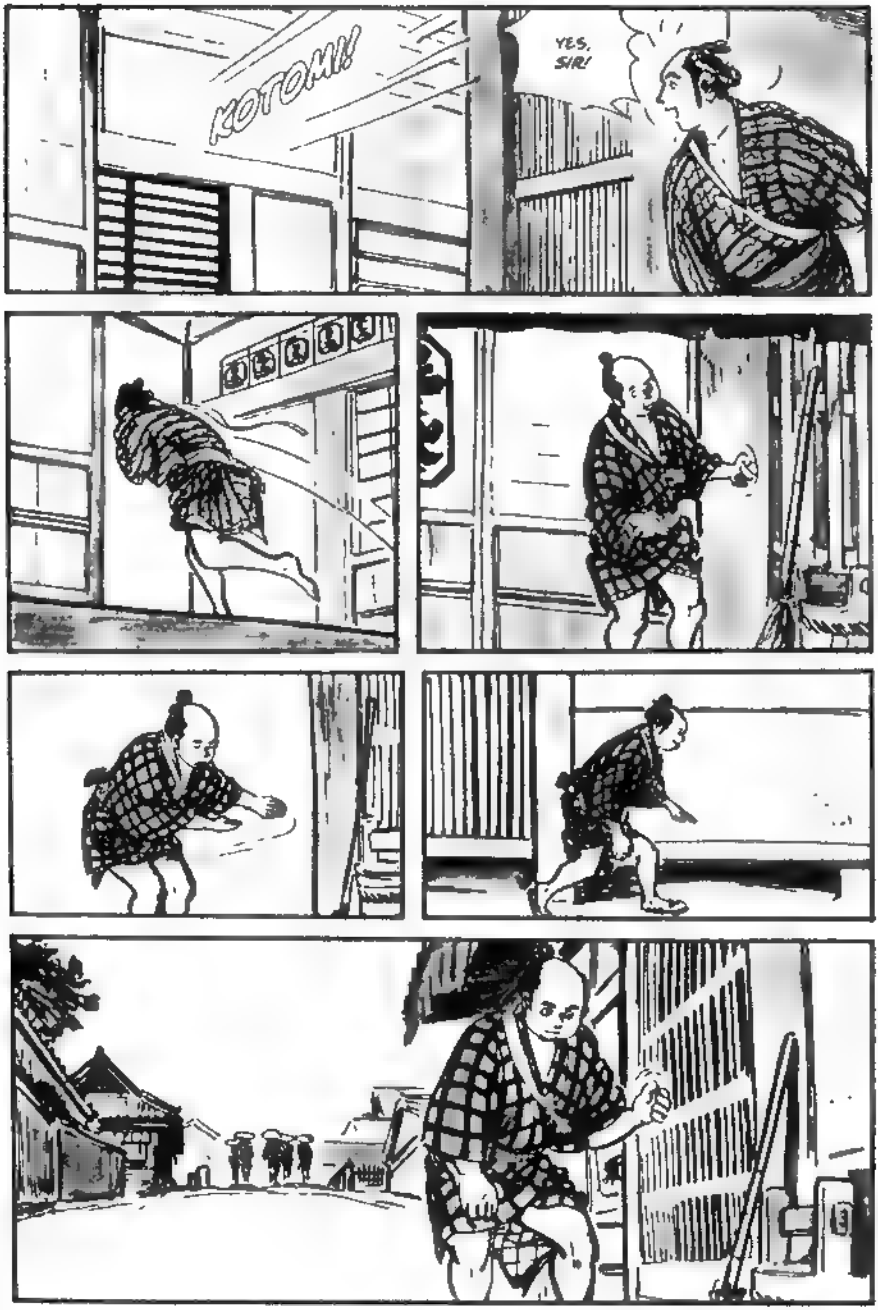
UH-HUH?! YOU AKUMBSKULL! SAY SIR WHEN I'M TALKIN' TO YOU! SHOW SOME RESPECT!
SIR...

NOT A WIMPY LITTLE SIR. YES, SIR! SING IT OUT!

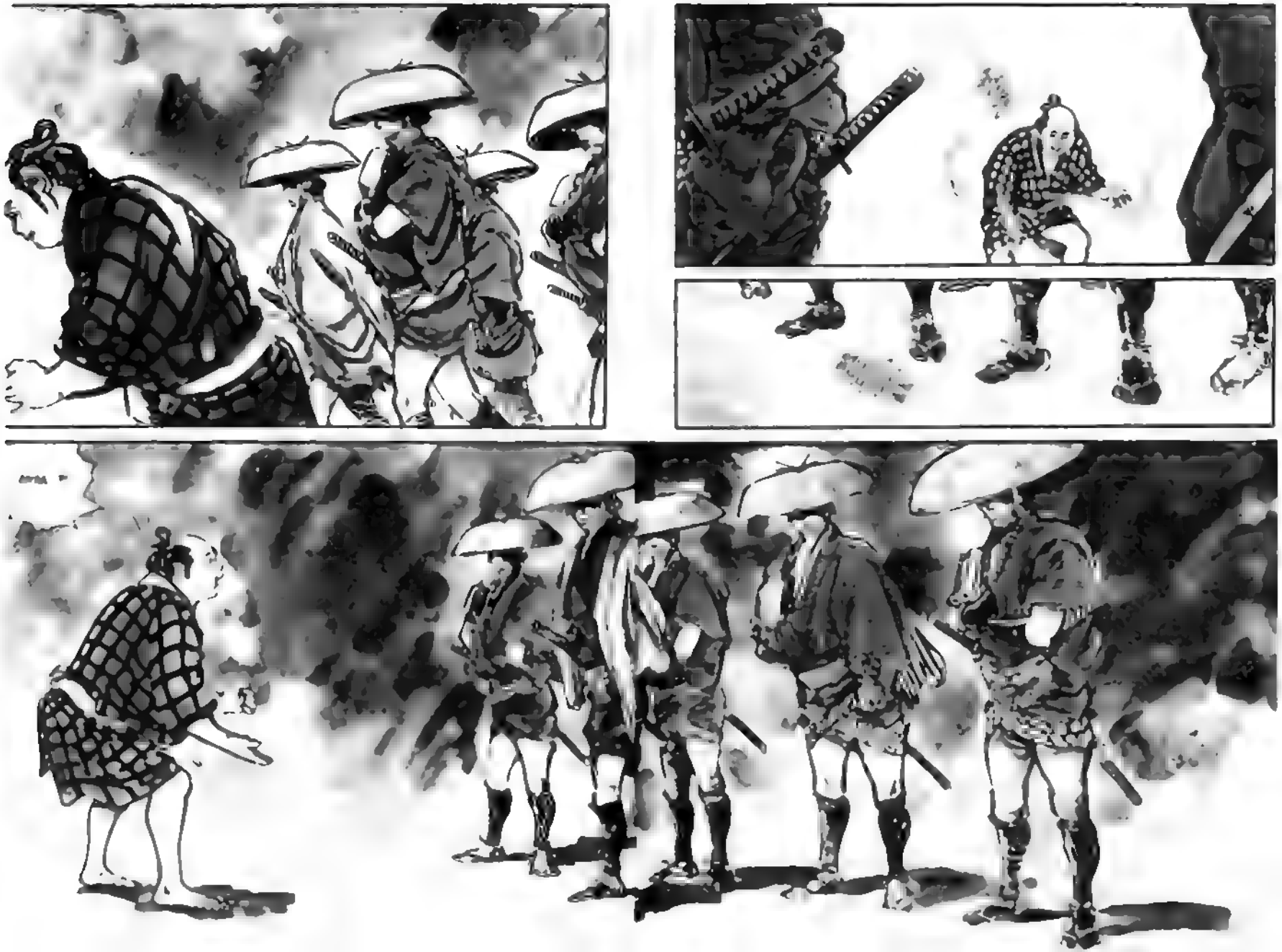
YES, SIR!!!

YOU'RE HOPE-LESS!
OKAY. WE'LL TRY AGAIN. WHEN YOU'RE ON AN ISOGITABI, YOU PUT YOUR GEAR DOWN IN THE ENTRANCE. BUT WHEN YOU'RE ON A RAKUTABI, YOU PUT YOUR GEAR ON THE SIDE, AND SHOW YOUR RESPECT WHEN YOU ENTER. YOU KNOW, JINGI O KIRU...
TELL ME 'BOUT THAT JINGI STUFF AGAIN, BOSS!
THERE'S AN ORDER TO IT, SEE?
FIRST, YOU SLIDE THE OUT-SIDE DOOR FROM THE OPEN SIDE.
OPEN IT. UH-HUH...
SHIKII-UCHI GOMEN KŌMURIMASU!
SHI... SHIKII-UCHI GOMEN K-KŌMURI-MASU!
NOW WATCH! YOU TAKE THREE AND A HALF STEPS FORWARD...
ONE STEP BACK.

THEN YOU SORTA SQUAT LIKE THIS, AND CLENCH YOUR RIGHT FIST.
IF YOU'RE AN OYABUN, YOU LET THE THUMB STICK OUT.
BUT SINCE WE'RE JUST KOBUN, WE SQUEEZE THE THUMB, LIKE THIS.
YES, SIR!!
THE LEFT HAND YOU STICK OUT WITH YOUR PALM UP!
NO, DUMMY! WHY DO YOU GOT YOUR THUMB OUT?!
I'M GONNA BE AN OYABUN SOMEDAY, SO I FIGURED, BETTER GIT STARTED!
HEH HEH HEH HEH!
GET SERIOUS, DARN IT!
TONK


KOTOMI!
YES, SIR!

OPEAL
ONE STEP TWO STEPS
ONE STEP BACK



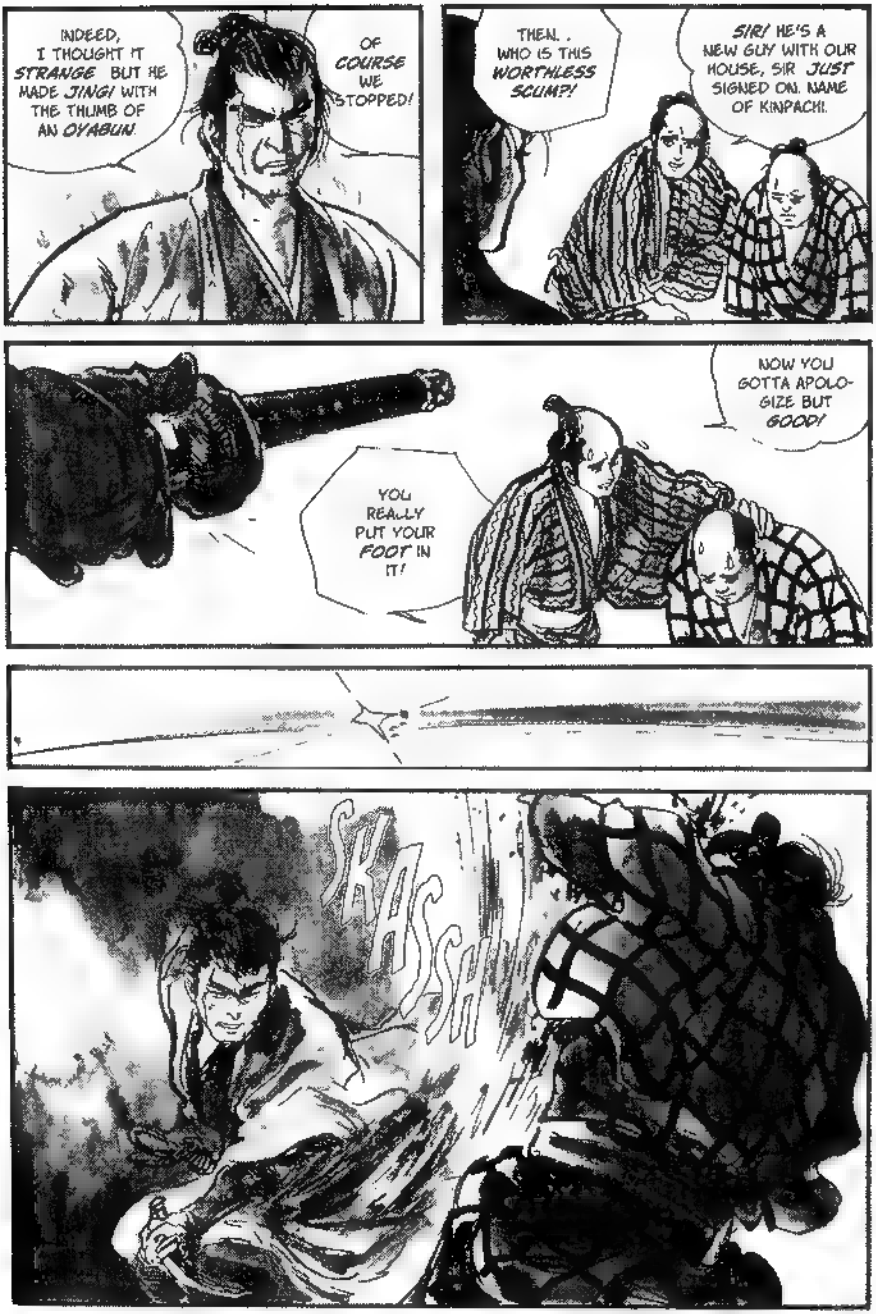
O-HIKAE-NASAI!
AH, AH, I'M

O-HIKAE-NASAI!

UH, YOU MEAN... AT YOUR SERVICE?!

WE BEG YOUR FORGIVENESS FOR RAISING OUR VOICES BEFORE YOUR HONORED ESTABLISHMENT. I PRESUME YOU ARE MITSUSHI-NO-BUNZŌ, HEAD OF THE MITSUSHI GAMBLING HOUSE.

TODAY I MEET YOU, SIR. FOR THE FIRST TIME MY HOME COUNTRY IS SANSHŪ.
AND I AM ISABURŌ, HEIR TO THE SECOND OYABUN OF THE HOUSE OF SHIMAMURA. WE TRAVEL TO DISTANT SETO-MACHI ALONG THE CHIKAN BYWAY. TODAY WE HAVE THE PLEASURE OF MAKING YOUR ACQUAINTANCE.
SHI SHIMURA-NO SABURŌ ?
M-MAN-KILLER ISABURŌ?!
WHAT ?!
OH, NO! K-KINPACHI! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE ?!
I-I B-BUT
KINPACHI? YOU'RE NOT MITSUGI-NO-BUNZŌ?!
H-HOW COULD THIS PATHETIC SANSHITA BE OUR OYABUN SIR! ONE LOOK WOULD TELL YOU!


INDEED, I THOUGHT IT STRANGE BUT HE MADE JINGI WITH THE THUMB OF AN OYABUN
OF COURSE WE STOPPED!
THEN. . WHO IS THIS WORTHLESS SCUMP!
SIR! HE'S A NEW GUY WITH OUR HOUSE, SIR JUST SIGNED ON. NAME OF KINPACHI.
YOU REALLY PUT YOUR FOOT IN IT!
NOW YOU GOTTA APOLOGIZE BUT GOOD!
KA SSH!

AHH PY!
KRK GRKK
THAT LITTLE ASS-HOLE MADE SHIM-AMURA ISABURŌ TAKE OFF HIS HAT ON AN ISOGITABI! HE MADE ME TREAT HIM LIKE AN EQUAL!
NOW WE'RE EVEN.
BUT BUT
YOU GOT A PROBLEMPY
N-NO, SIR.
WE'RE NOT HERE TO HANG OUT WITH AUTSUGI WE WERE JUST PASSING BY
WE'LL BE PARKED AT CHŌMEI TEMPLE FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS YOU WANT TO COMPLAIN, COME ON BY ANY TIME
KWPACHI !!
D-DAMN IT ALL!!

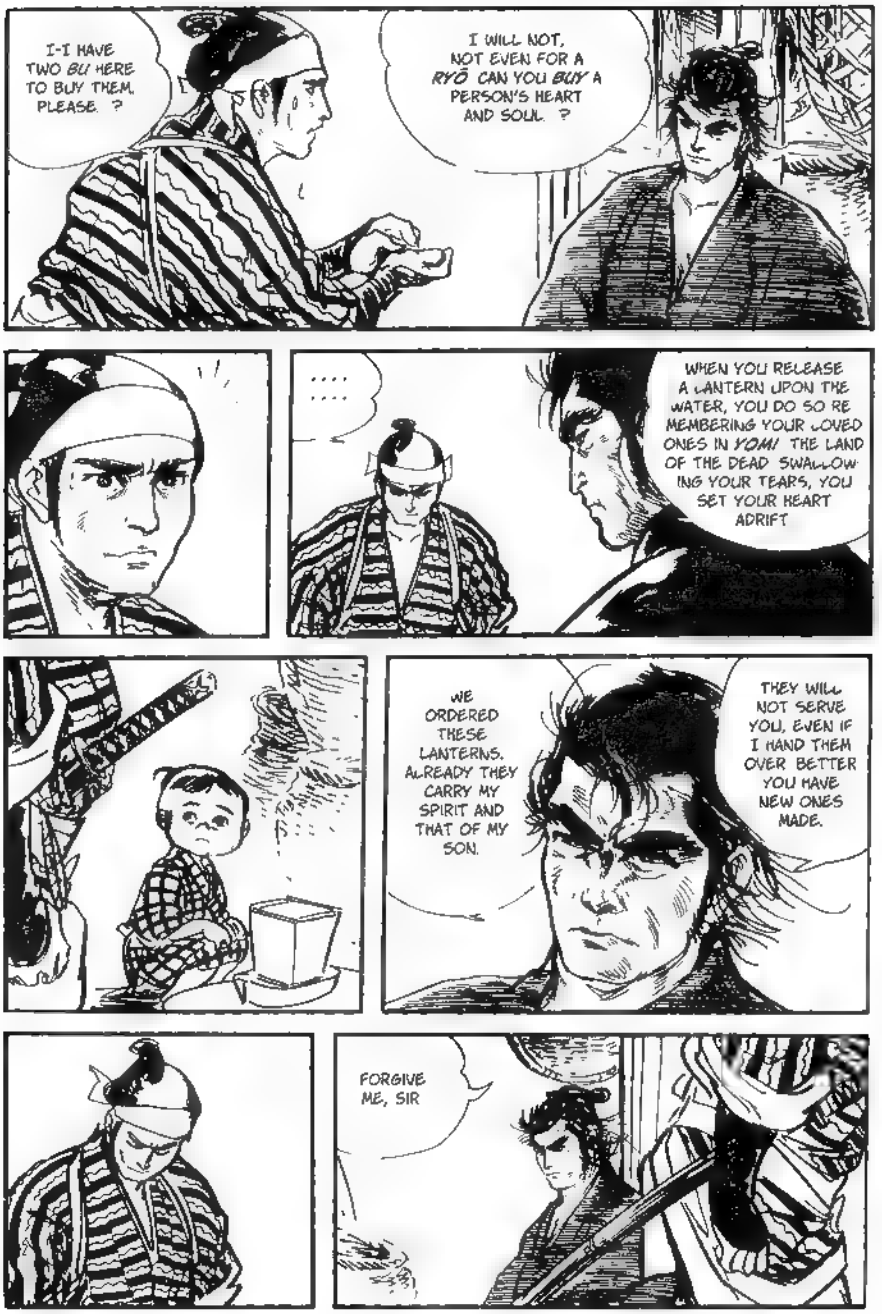
OYABUN!
KINPACHI'S SOUL CAN'T REST IN PEACE!
PLEASE, SIR! EVEN THE SCORE WITH THE BASTARD THAT KILLED HIM!
OYABUN!
THE RIGHT IS ON THEIR SIDE! DO YOU WANT US TO BE THE LAUGHINGSTOCK OF THE GAMBLING WORLD? IT'S MANKILLER ISABURŌ WE'RE TALKING ABOUT

THOSE GUYS TOOK TO THE ROAD LAST YEAR AFTER CRUSHING THE FORTY-MAN AKISHIMA GANG IN A DEIRI, JUST THE FIVE OF THEM.
THEY'RE TOO TOUGH FOR US.
BUT, OYABUN ..
FORGET IT! WE CAN'T RISK THE WHOLE FAMILY JUST BECAUSE KINPACHI SCREWED UP
OYABUN!!
ENOUGH, KOTOMI! YOU'RE NOT A BABY!
CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND EVEN THAT MUCH?
SKRSH
THEN. THEN I RETURN YOUR SAKAZUKI!!

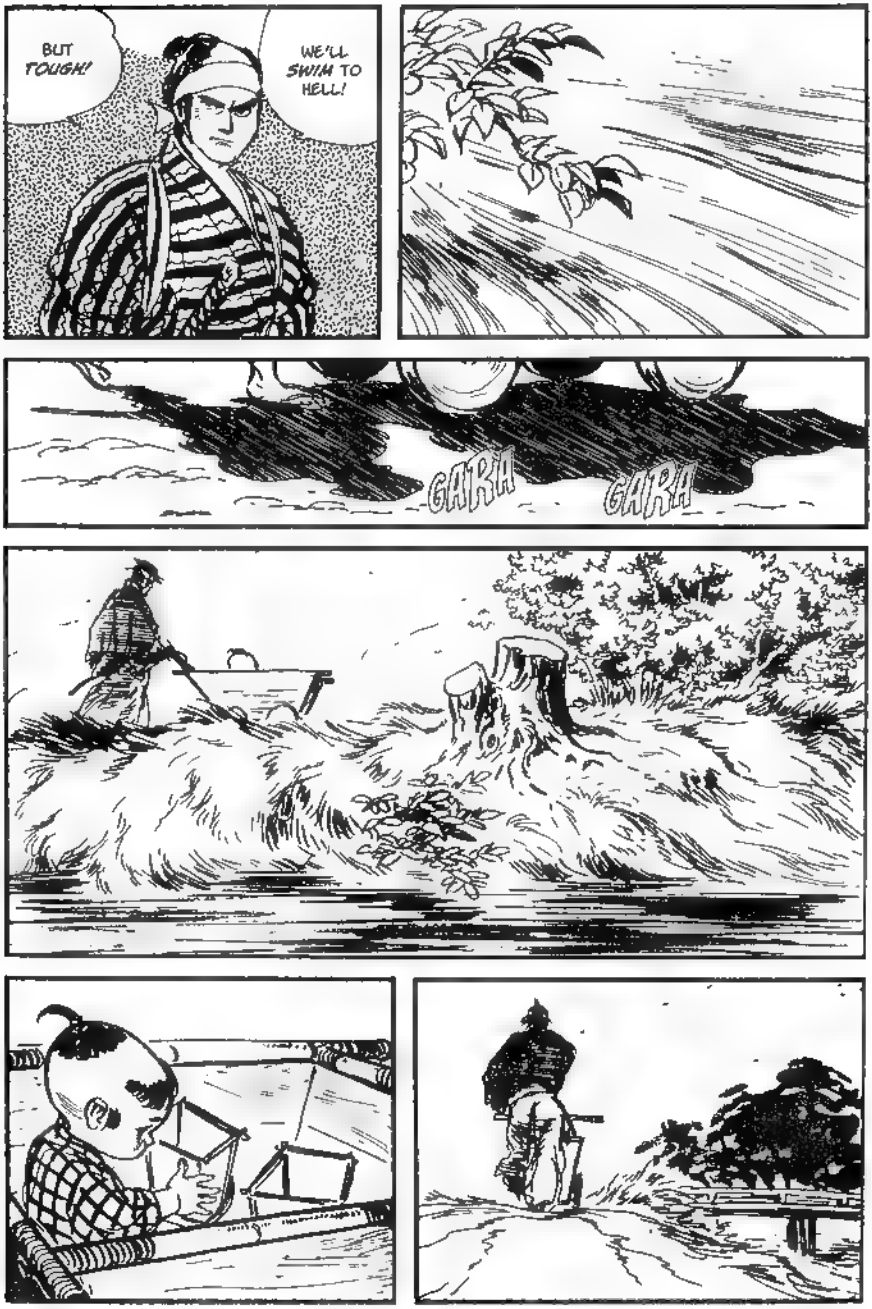
TONK
KNOK

SPARK
SHINK

GRAMPS! LET ME HAVE THESE TWO TŌRŌ!
SORRY, SON. I'VE SOLD 'EM TO THIS GOOD SIR AND HIS LAD AND NOW I'M PACKIN' 'EM UP
MAKE YOUR OWN, SON.
..THAT'S THE WAY NAGASHI-TŌRŌ USED TO BE.
SIR, I BEG YOU—PLEASE LET ME HAVE THESE TWO TŌRŌ
I WILL NOT


I-I HAVE TWO *BU* HERE TO BUY THEM, PLEASE. ?
I WILL NOT, NOT EVEN FOR A *RYŌ* CAN YOU *BUY* A PERSON'S HEART AND SOUL. ?
....
....
WHEN YOU RELEASE A LANTERN UPON THE WATER, YOU DO SO REMEMBERING YOUR LOVED ONES IN *YOMI* THE LAND OF THE DEAD SWALLOWING YOUR TEARS, YOU SET YOUR HEART ADRIFT
WE ORDERED THESE LANTERNS. ALREADY THEY CARRY MY SPIRIT AND THAT OF MY SON.
THEY WILL NOT SERVE YOU, EVEN IF I HAND THEM OVER BETTER YOU HAVE NEW ONES MADE.
FORGIVE ME, SIR

THERE Y' BE ALL DONE!
I WANTED TO FLOAT OUR SPIRITS DOWN THE RIVER. ME AND KINPACHI.


BUT TOUGH!
WE'LL SWIM TO HELL!
GARA
GARA

K-K-
KINPACHI'S
KILLER!!
P-PREPARE
TO DIE!!
HYAHH!!!

AUUGHH!!
SKUSH
SHIT!
YOU BASTARDS !!
SHIT!!

SCUM!
ROT IN HELL!
SHASH
SHASSH
NNG..
UNGH ..!
HRN! FRIGGIN' SANSHITA.

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU!?

ASSAS-SIN.
LONE WOLF AND CUB!

WHAT?!
AN ASSASSIN?!
"MANKILLER" ISABURŌ OTHER-WISE KNOWN AS SHIMAMURA-NO-ISABURŌ?!

DAMN *RIGHT* I'M ISABURŌ! AN ASSASSIN? DON'T MAKE ME *LAUGH*, YOU BEGGAR *RŌNIN!* WHO *HIRED* YOU?!

I TAKE YOUR LIFE!

FWSST
SKUSSH
NGYAH!!
SKUSSH
BASTARD!!
SCREW YOU!
SCHOK
GYAHH!
UNGH!

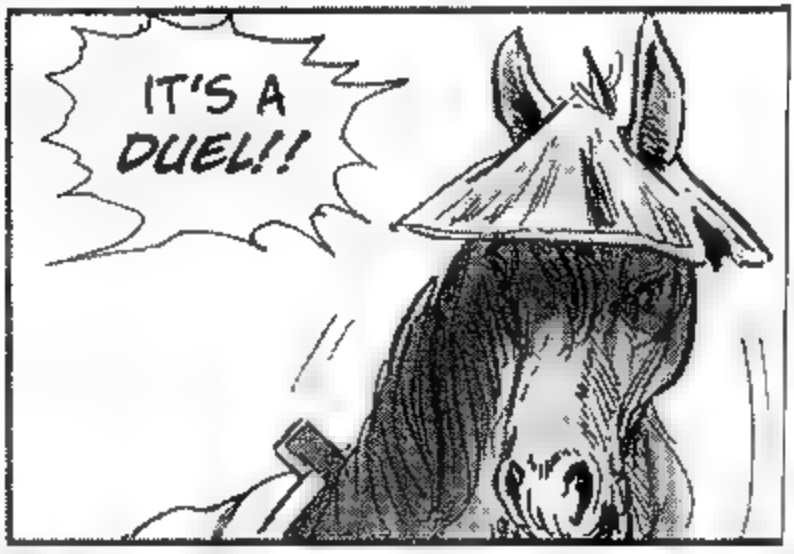
SH-SHIT!!
THUKK!!

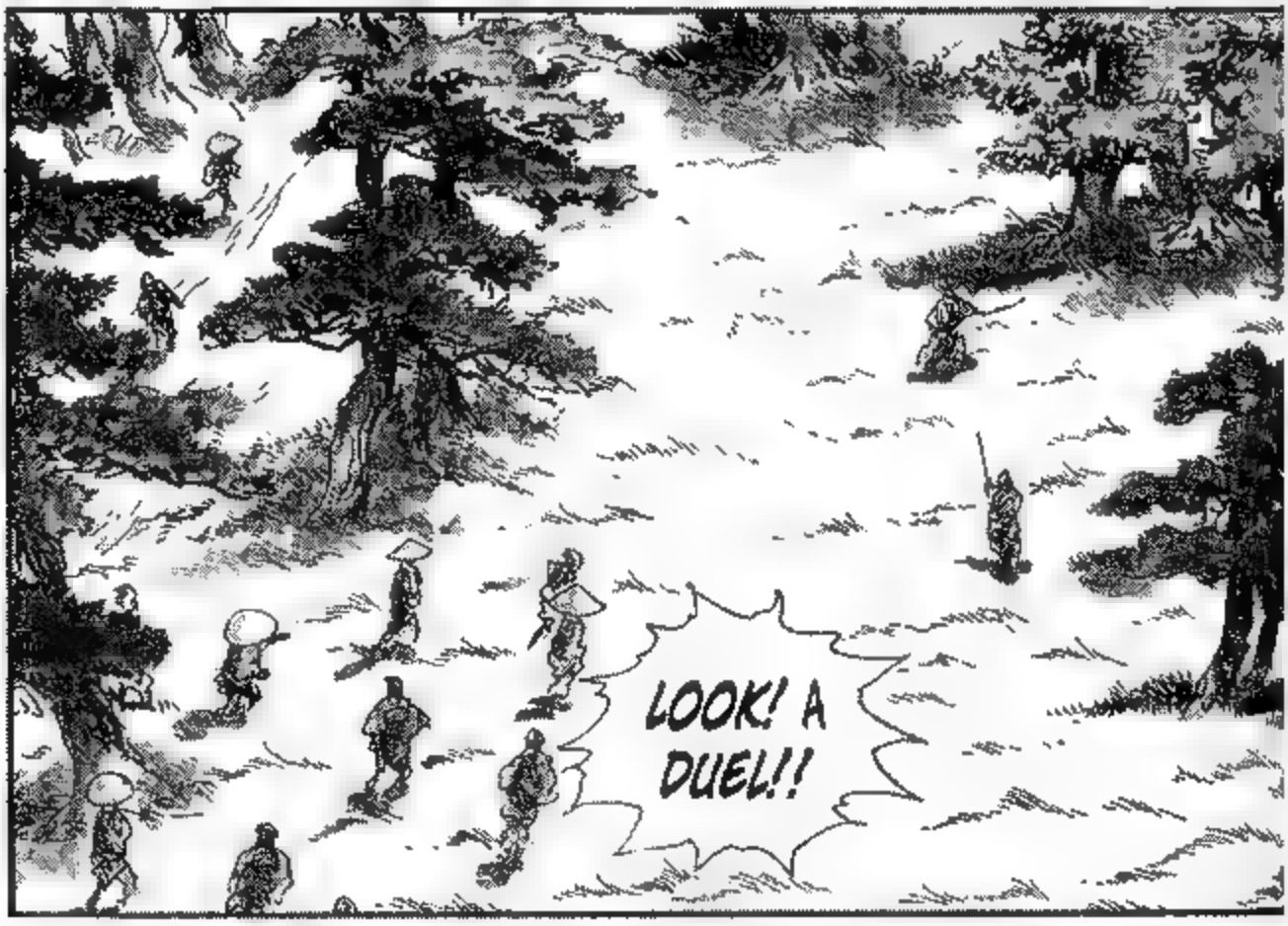
AGRH
UNS
UHF
SPEAK!
THE THE
LANTERN
WANTED
TO FLOAT
KINPACHI'S SPIRIT
MY SPIRIT
YOUR
NAME!
KOTO
M.

*KINPACHI
*KOTOMI

the thirtieth

Deer Chaser


IT'S A
DUEL!!


LOOK! A
DUEL!!

FWST
YEOW!
OHHH!
HYAHH!

HEY, HEY! GO-INKYO! WHICH ONE'S GONNA WIN? WHICH?!
ISN'T IT OBVIOUS, LAD?
THE LITTLE OFFICIAL BOUND FOR EDO
HUH?!
HE LOOKS WEAK, BUT HE'S GOOD VERY GOOD INDEED
HE'S DELIB-ERATELY WEARING OUT HIS POWERFUL OPPONENT
STRATEGIC FLIGHT! I CALL IT

STRATEGY? ARE YOU NUTS? NO WAY HE WINS!
TUT, TUT, LAD. IT'S ALL IN THE EYES.. HE FLAILS, YET HIS EYES
CALM AND STEADY!
OH, SURE! ON PURPOSE? HAW!
I SAY THE RŌNIN DICES HIM! FOR EVERY COIN I GOT ON ME! ARE YOU IN?!
CERTAINLY, CERTAINLY
WHIT
THERE YOU GO. TWENTY-TWO, TWENTY-THREE RYŌ
IF YOU WIN, JUST TAKE OUT WHAT I OWE YOU.
SSSST

LET ME IN ON THAT BET, SIR!
I'LL PUT IN THREE RYO!
SURELY MY DEAR!
UOHHH!! RYAHH!!
KYAHH! HAIEE!
GOSH WILL YOU TAKE MY BET TOO, SIR?
CERTAINLY, CERTAINLY OH! NOW! OH!
HEH HEH HEH. TWO SHU ON THE BIG GUY
I'M IN!!

HERE YOU GO, HONEY
RIGHT?

YOU... YOU CURS!!
HOW DARE YOU MAKE SPORT OF A DUEL AMONG SAMURAI!!

INSOLENT
COMMONERS!!

AIEEEE! HELLLLP!

NGARR!!

YOU SCUM!!

ONE..
TWO.
THREE..

THERE.. I MAKE IT FOUR RYŌ AND TWO BU CLEAN!
KHM.
KCHK
SLSSSH
I BARELY GET ANY BLOOD WHEN I CLICK IT
THIS MECHANISM'S SHOT
TOMORROW WE'LL BE DEER CHASING FOR THE SEITEN GANG IN SASAME-JUKU.
OUR TAKE'S TWENTY PERCENT OF THE "OFFERINGS."
I WANT YOU TO TAKE THIS CASH, AND REALLY WORK UP YOUR COSTUMES

THE CLASSIER THE MARKS YOU BRING IN.

.THE BIGGER OUR TAKE.

THERE'S AN ABANDONED TEMPLE IN SASAME-JUKU, ANYŌ TEMPLE. RENDEZVOUS THERE AT THE SECOND HOUR PAST MIDNIGHT

ONCE I'VE SEEN YOUR ACTS, WE'LL DECIDE HOW TO RUN THE CHASE.

OKAY! NOW, SPLIT UP!

SHIKA-OI ."DEER CHASERS." THAT WAS WHAT THEY CALLED THE TRICKSTERS WHO LURED CLIENTS TO THE GAMBLING HOUSES. NOT JUST ORDINARY HOUSES...NO, THE JOINTS THAT HIRED *SHIKA-OI* WERE SCAMS, TARGETING GAMBLING ADDICTS AND THE GULLIBLE RICH WITH RIGGED GAMES. THEY'D STRIP THE VERY CLOTHES OFF THEIR BACKS.

THE *SHIKA-OI* WORKED IN TEAMS TO TRICK THE MARKS.

THEIR BOSS, THE *ŌBIKE*, OR *UWA*.

HIS CREW DROVE THE "DEER"..

..AND THEY HAD DIFFERENT NAMES, DEPENDING ON THE PARTS THEY PLAYED. THE *AORI*, THE *CHŪKEI*...

THE DAKI,
THE MOCHI
FOUR IN ALL

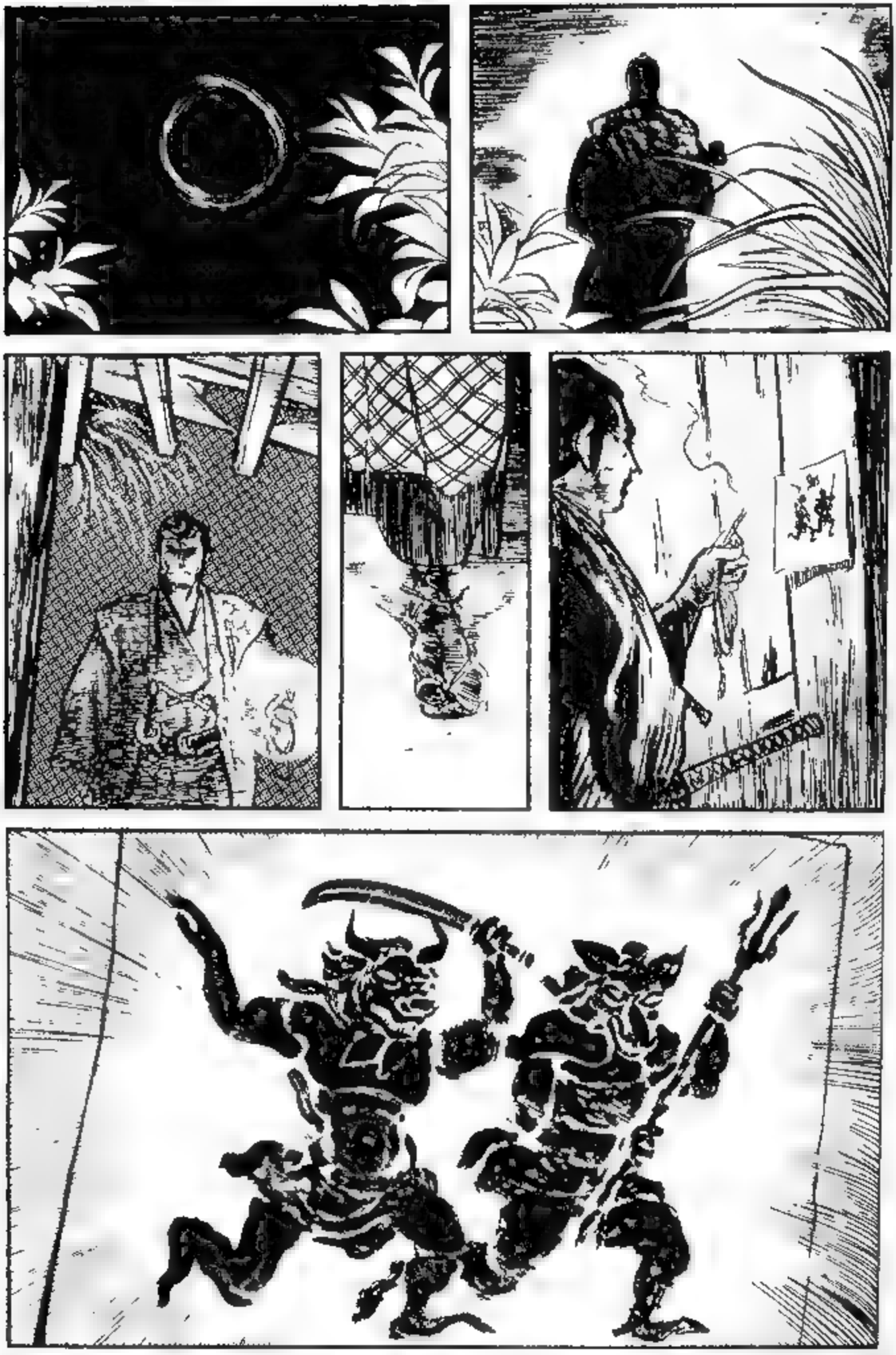
"ANGEL"
O-KANE,
THE DAKI

THE
CHUHEI
"HONEST"
HEINAI.

"BLANKS"
SHICHI THE
SECOND
DAKI

"MONKEY"
INOKICHI,
THE MOCHI

AND THEIR
OBIKI
SOROKU

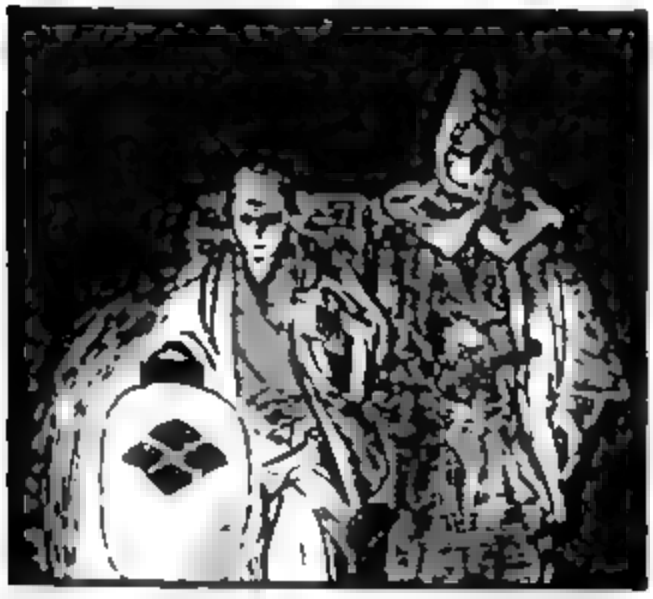


KLICK
KLOK
KLICK
KLOK
KLICK
KLOK

?!
KLOK
KLOK
KLOK
KLOK
WHAT THE HECK?
SOME KINDA CURSE?
?!

A GOFUN OF THE SIX PATHS?!
WHO WOULD PUT UP SOME THING LIKE—
...?!

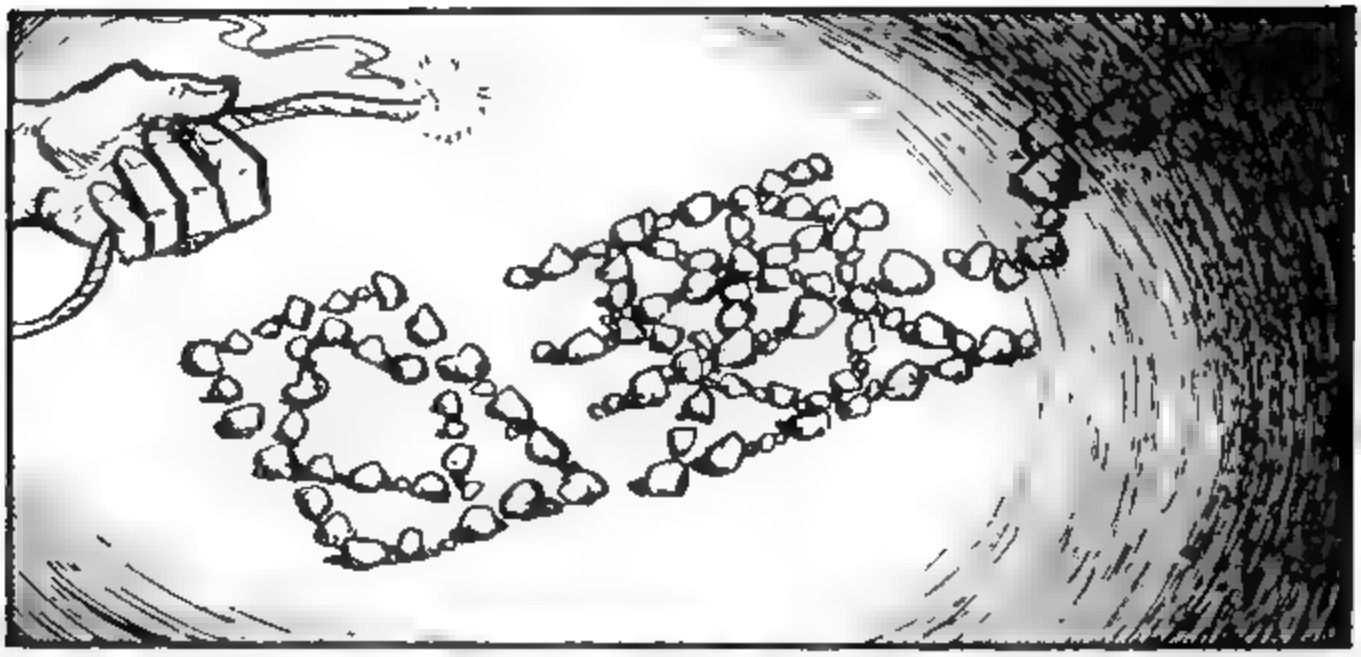
WHO'D COME TO A DUMP LIKE



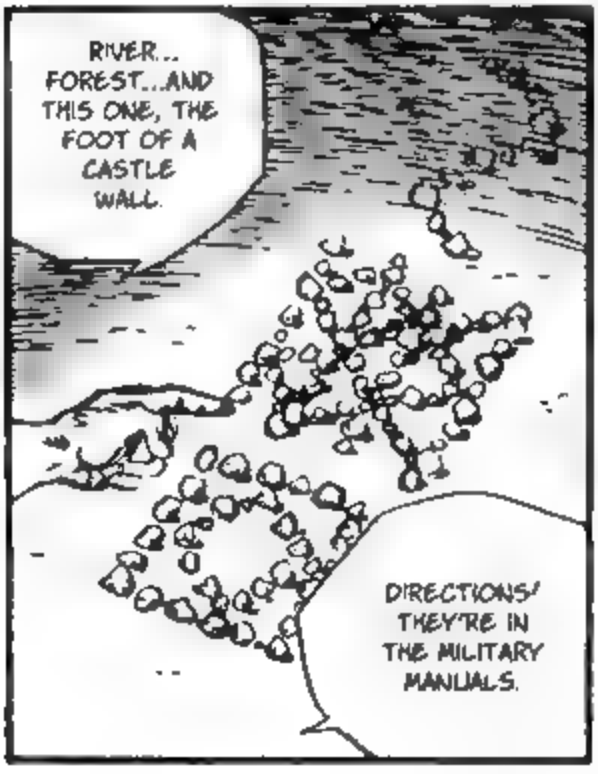
THE TAKEDA-BISHI CREST... I'M SURE ISHIKAWA SHUME FROM THE SASAKI GARRISON USES THAT

GET ME MORE PEBBLES
YES, SIR.
WHACK!
BE CARE-FUL!!
S-SORRY, SIR!

THAT SOUNDED LIKE... MONEY!
THAT WHOLE BAG + FIVE HUNDRED MYŌ AT LEAST!
"ULP!"
THEN IT MUST BE!



I THOUGHT SO DŌCHŪJIN TRAIL MARKERS!
WHAT ARE THEY? THESE DOCHŪ THINGS...?


RIVER... FOREST...AND THIS ONE, THE FOOT OF A CASTLE WALL.
DIRECTIONS! THEY'RE IN THE MILITARY MANUALS.

SAY..OVER BY THE OIRASE RIVER THERE'S AN OLD CASTLE RUIN IN THE TENJIN WOODS...
THAT'S IT!

BUT WHY WOULD ANYONE...
AND THIS THING, TOO!
THAT'S A DRAWING OF THE HORSE AND OX-HEADED DEMONS OF MEIFUMADŌ
IT'S CALLED A RIKUDŌ GOFU. A TALISMAN OF THE SIX PATHS! PEOPLE WHO CURSE THEIR ENEMIES POST THEM IN OLD TEMPLES, PRAYING FOR THE DEATH OF THEIR FOES
BUT I'VE HEARD RUMORS RUMORS THERE'S AN ASSASSIN CALLED LONE WOLF AND CUB
HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE LETHAL—NO ONE ESCAPES. AND THEY SAY HE LIVES BY MEIFUMADŌ, SEEKING REVENGE...
THE GOFU, THE MONEY...AND NOW THE TRAIL MARKERS!
IF THIS IS A CODE, FOR CLIENTS TO REACH AN ASSASSIN...

KYAAK
W-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
WITH FIVE HUNDRED RYŌ, WE COULD PUT DOWN A DEPOSIT .POST A BOND .
WE WOULDN'T NEED ANY YAKUZA HANDOUTS! WE COULD OPEN OUR OWN GAMBLING HOUSE!
ROPE IN THE FATTEST MARKS OF ALL. GET ALL THE "OFFERINGS" WE WANT!
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE THINKING WE'LL..?!
WE'RE DEER CHASERS! MASTER IMPERSONATORS!
NO ONE WORKS THE STING BETTER THAN US!

WITH THE TRAIL MARKERS GONE, THEY'RE FAIR GAME!
A CHANCE LIKE THIS COMES ALONG BUT ONCE IN A LIFETIME!
IMPERSONATE LONE WOLF AND CUB, AND FIVE HUNDRED RYŌ IS OURS!

THE DEER HUNTER BECOMES THE WOLF, AND COLLECTS THE ASSASSIN'S FEE.
GET IT?!
BUT-BUT WHO'S GONNA PLAY THIS WOLF GUY, GO-INKYO?!
IF WE'RE SCAMMING ISHI-KAWA SHIME FROM THE SASAME GARRISON
THIS IS SERIOUS BUSINESS. TOO MUCH FOR OUR CHŪHEI RIGHT KEINA!?

ONE WRONG STEP, AND IT'S THE CHOP A CAT DON'T GOT ENOUGH LIVES TO PULL THIS OFF!
WHICH LEAVES INOKICHI HERE, BUT CAN HE MAKE HIMSELF LOOK LIKE A SUPER ASSASSIN. ? I DON'T THINK SO!
I'LL DO IT
YOU, GO-INKYO ?!
THAT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE, SIR!
YOU MAY BE OUR ŌBIKE, GO-INKYO, BUT THINK ABOUT YOUR AGE! EVEN IF YOU MAKE YOURSELF LOOK THE PART, HOW'RE YOU GONNA UNBEND THOSE OLD BONES OF YOURS, SIR?!

I'M SŌROKU, THE ŌBIKI OF THE SHIKA-OI DEER CHASERS! I'LL SHOW YOU THE IM-PERSONATION OF THE CENTURY! DON'T YOU WORRY!
THE REAL PROBLEM IS THE KID
KID? WHAT KID?
THEY CALL HIM LONE WOLF AND CUB, REMEMBER? HE'S SUPPOSED TO HAVE A KID.
OH, YEAH! RIGHT!
I HEAR HE'S A BOY, ABOUT THREE YEARS OLD. THE FOUR OF YOU FAN OUT AND FIND A KID TO FIT, GRAB HIM, AND BRING HIM HERE!
YESSIR! LEAVE IT TO US!
AND HURRY!! ISHIKAWA SHIME WON'T WAIT AROUND FOREVER! I'VE GOT TO BE AT THAT CASTLE WALL BY DAYBREAK, OR ELSE!

GO-INKYO!
HEH HEH HEH. DON'T LOOK SO SURPRISED.
IT'S ME.
BUT BUT THAT FACE!
THAT THAT CAN'T BE MAKE-UP...
HEH HEH. I'M NOT MADE UP
THIS IS MY REAL FACE.

W-WHAT ON EARTH ?!
YES.. I'VE FALLEN FAR. I'M A DAMN SHIKA-OI NOW. BUT ONCE, I WAS A SAMURAI!
THEN, THEN, GO-INKYO! YOU'VE BEEN
YOU'VE TRICKED US?! HOW HOW COULD YOU?!
FOOL! DO YOU THINK A SAMURAI COULD SHOW HIS REAL FACE AS A DEER CHASER?!
YOU THINK HE COULD LIVE THAT WAY ?!
THIS IS MY OLD FACE. THE FACE I PLEDGED TO NEVER REVEAL AS A DEER CHASER!
I DIDN'T DO IT TO TRICK YOU. I DID IT BECAUSE I'M A SAMURAI!
BESIDES, WE'RE IMPERSONATORS. WE LIVE BY DECEPTION, BY HIDING OUR-SELVES, OUR TRUE IDENTITIES.
. . . . . .

SO WHY ARE YOU SURPRISED AT MY DISGUISE?
NOW. THE BOY?
RIGHT..THE KID IT'S THE WEIRDEST THING—HE WAS SLEEPING IN A LITTLE ROADSIDE SHRINE RIGHT OUTSIDE SASAME-JUKU. IT WAS PERFECT!
ALONE ?
YEAH. GUESS HE'S A LOCAL, IT'S SO HOT AND MUGGY TONIGHT...
I DUNNO— MAYBE HE SNUCK OUT TO GET SOME FRESH AIR, AND FELL ASLEEP
OR MAYBE HE WAS BAD AND HIS FOLKS LOCKED HIM OUT TO PUNISH HIM? WHO CARES—WE GOT HIM!
HE'S A STRANGE KID, THOUGH.
HE WASN'T AFRAID AT ALL AND NOW HE'S SO CALM IT'S KINDA CREEPY
ACTUALLY, HE FOUGHT US AT FIRST BUT I GAVE HIM ONE LOUSY COPPER, AND HE SHUT RIGHT UP
I MEAN, HOW GREEDY CAN A KID GET?! HAH—PEASANTS! THE PARENTS ARE BAD ENOUGH, BUT THEIR KIDS'LL SELL THEIR SOULS FOR MONEY

HE WON'T LET IT GO *LOOK* AT HIM CLUTCHING IT. .LIKE IT'S WORTH MORE THAN HIS OWN LIFE!
HE WAS A CHILD WHO SAW HIS FATHER TAKE MONEY TO KILL.
MONEY, EVEN THIS PALTRY *BITA-SEN* COPPER, WAS A GIFT FROM *MEIFUMADŌ*. TALLIED IN HUMAN LIVES.
I FIGURE IF WE DO HIM UP A BIT, HE'LL PASS FINE FOR A *RŌNIN* K.D.
THERE'S NO TIME!
HEINA! GET YOUR *RŌNIN* OUTFIT AND THE SWORDS!
GOTCHA !

HOH!!
YOU ARE THE ONE THEY CALL LONE WOLF AND CUB?!
THE TRAIL MARKERS OF MEIFUMADŌ BRING ME TO THIS DARKLING PLACE.
WHO ELSE WOULD FOLLOW THEIR CALL?!

DIE WITHIN
THE SECOND
HOUR

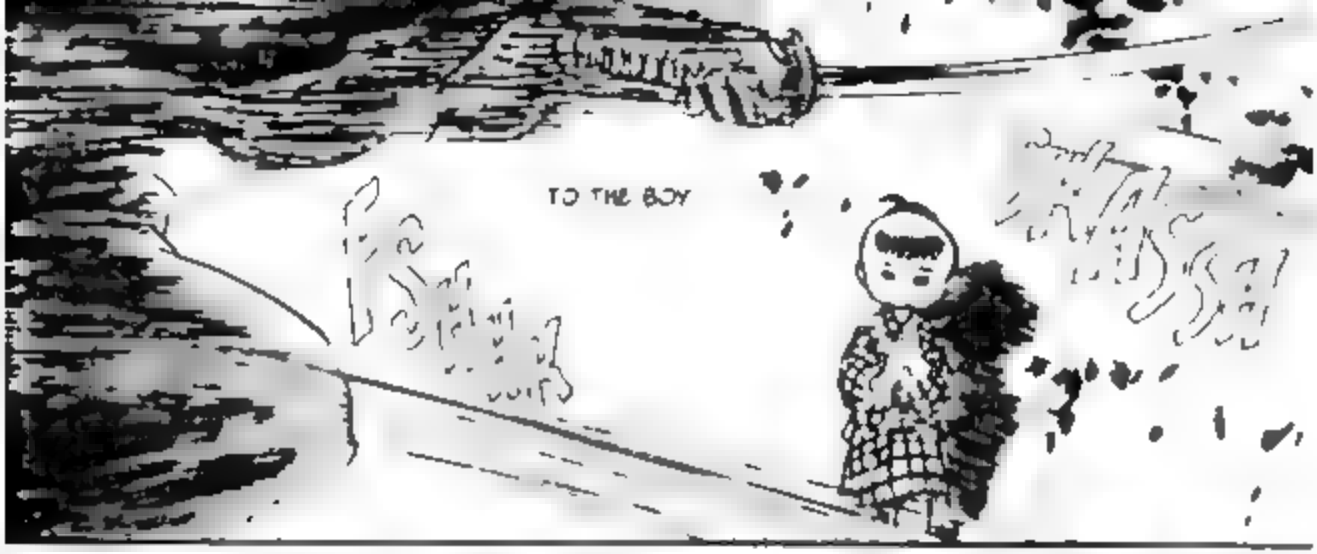
PLEASE ACCEPT THIS. WE RELY UPON YOU.

HE. . HE DID IT!
F-FIVE HUNDRED RYŌ!!
THAT'S OUR GO-INKYO!
IN-CREDIBLE, BOSS!

NO MORE LIVING OFF HANDOUTS FROM YAKUZA! NO MORE DEER CHASING!
PRECISELY!

NGYAHH!
AAAA?!
W-WHAT ARE YOU—
GO-INKYO! WHY?!
MY REAL FACE! DIDN'T I SAY I'D NEVER SHOW IT AS A DEER CHASER?!
IN OTHER WORDS, THE MOMENT I REVEALED IT, I BECAME A SAMURAI AGAIN! WITH THIS MONEY, I CAN RETURN TO MY HAN, AND RE-ESTABLISH MY HOUSEHOLD! THAT WAS MY PLAN FROM THE BEGINNING!

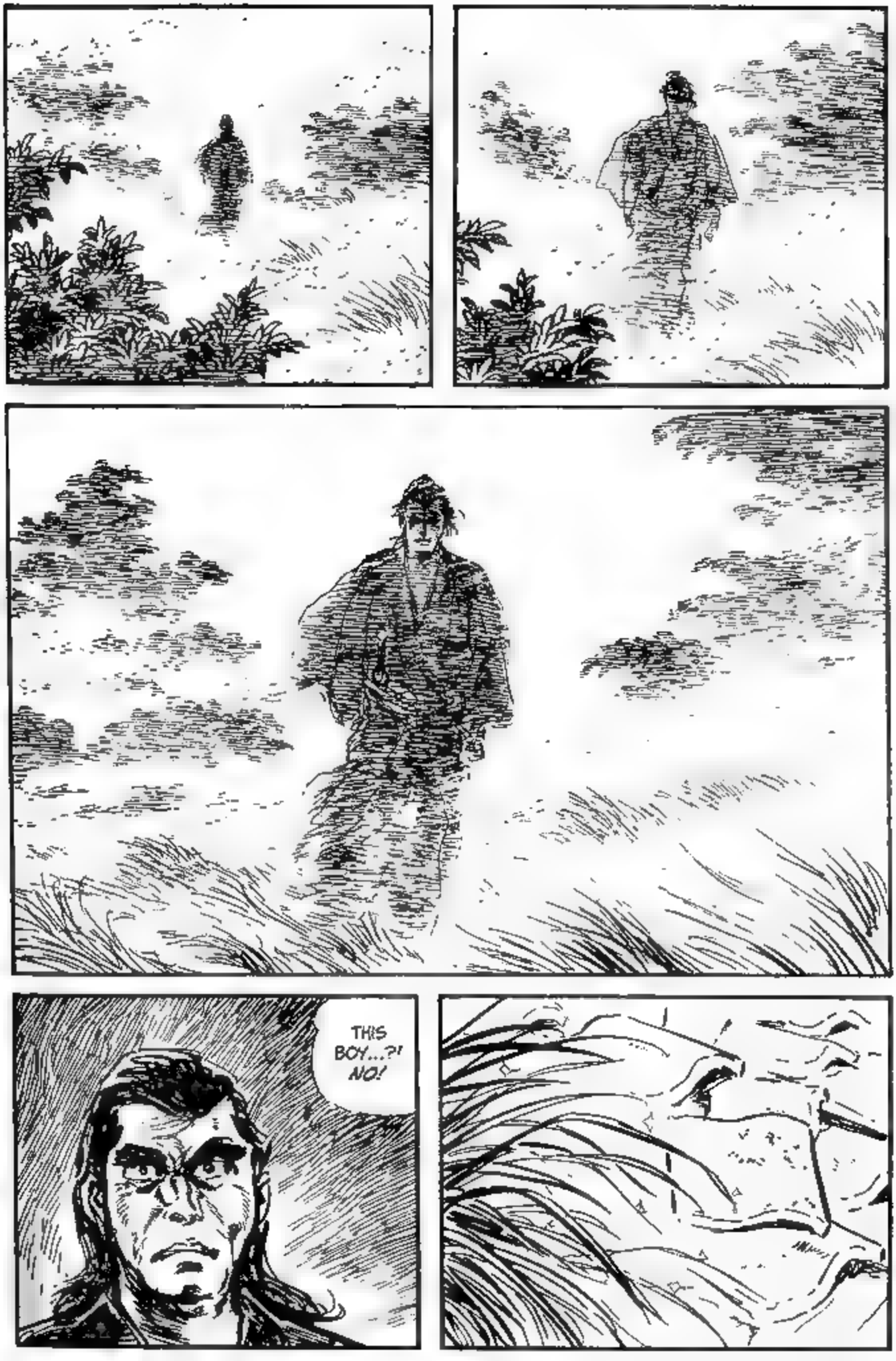
D-DAMN YOU!
WE TRUSTED YOU!
GIOK
NGGK!
N-NO!!
MONSTER!!
HEH HEH HEH
INDEED. AS MONSTROUS AS A SAMURAI'S HEART! HOW CAN INFERIORS UNDERSTAND?!


TO THE BOY

BE IT FIVE HUNDRED RYŌ IN GOLD OR A SINGLE COPPER COIN

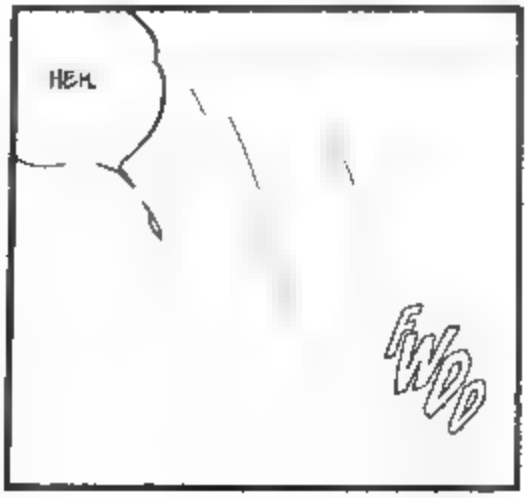
IT WAS ALL THE CURRENCY OF HUMAN LIFE

THE COINAGE OF MEIFUMADŌ INCARNATE...
SORRY, KID. BUT YOU SAW MY FACE, TOO!
PAPA!


THIS BOY...?! NO!

THEY SAY THE WOLF NEVER SHOWS HIS FACE, AND DRIVES THE DEER WITH THE TERROR OF HIS DISTANT HOWL.

HEH HEH HEH. A *DEER* CHASER. AND I THOUGHT *I* WAS THE WOLF .!

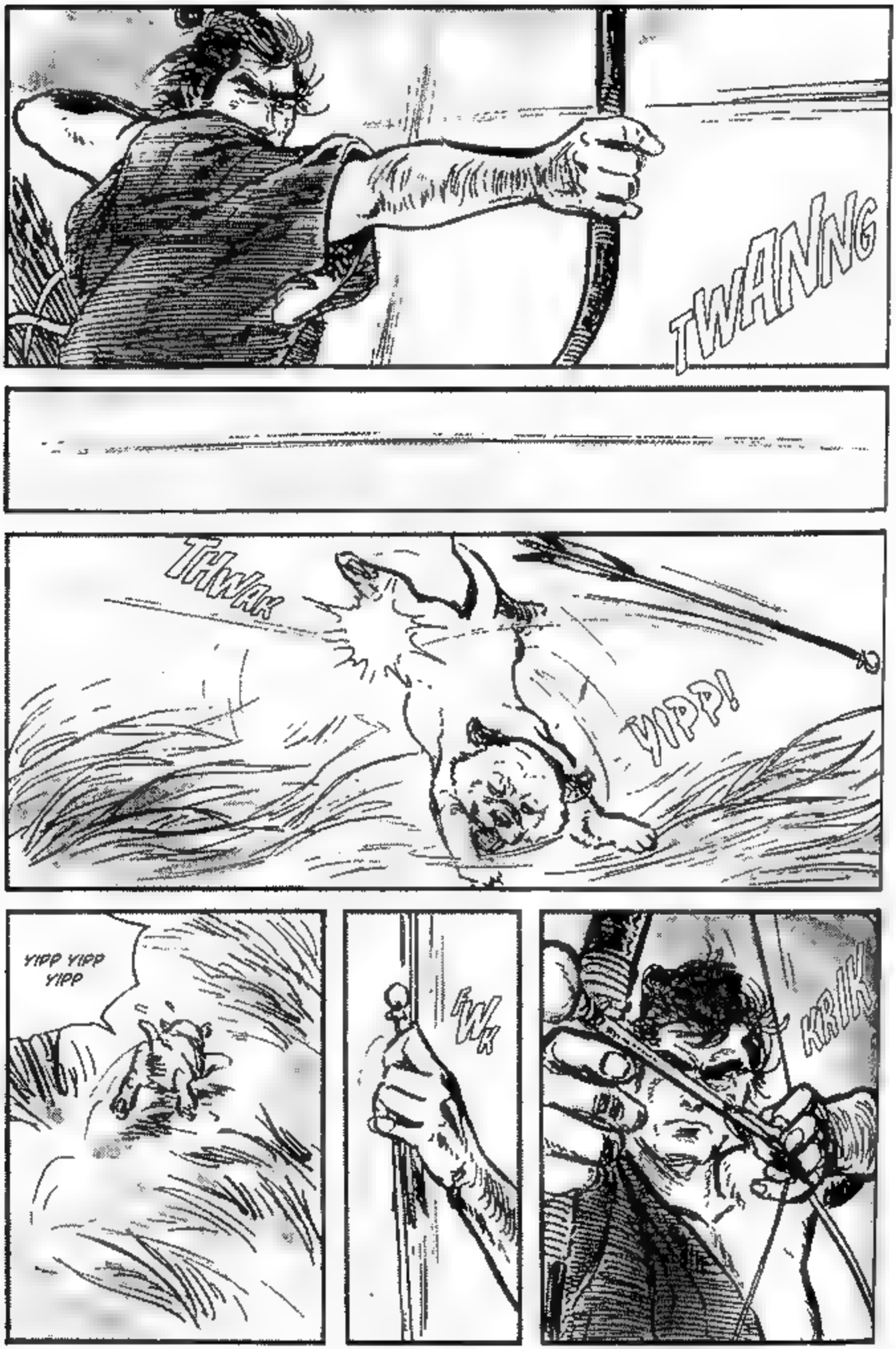

HEH.
FWDD

THE TAKEDA-BISHI CREST

SO. THE ISHIKAWA CLAN, FROM THE SASAME GARRISON...

the thirty-first

Hunger Town


TWANNG
THWAK
YIPP!
YIPP YIPP YIPP
TWK
KRIK

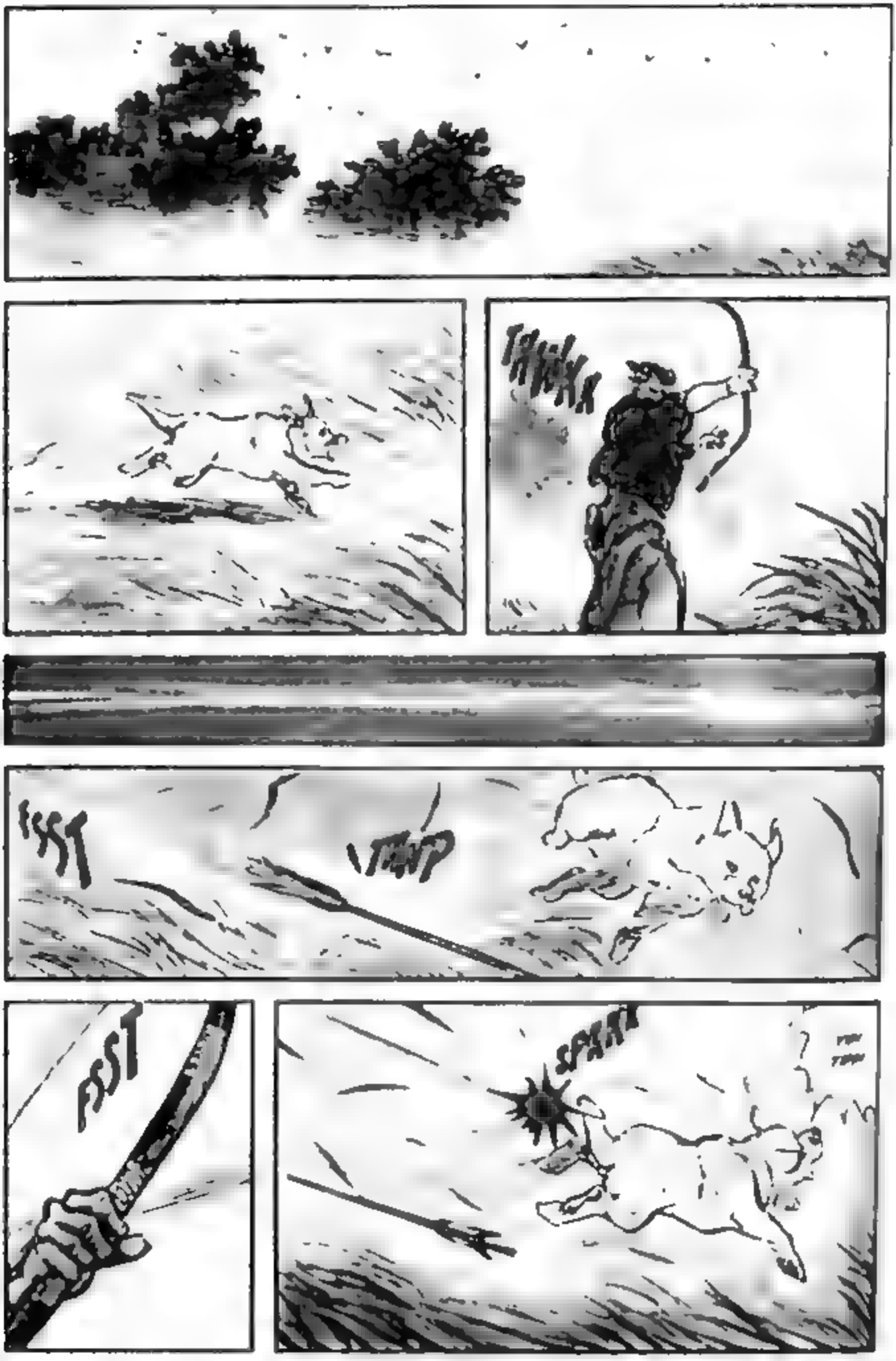
FSST
FSST
FSST
SPANG
YIPP
YIP
YIPP
YIKE!
YIKE
YIKE

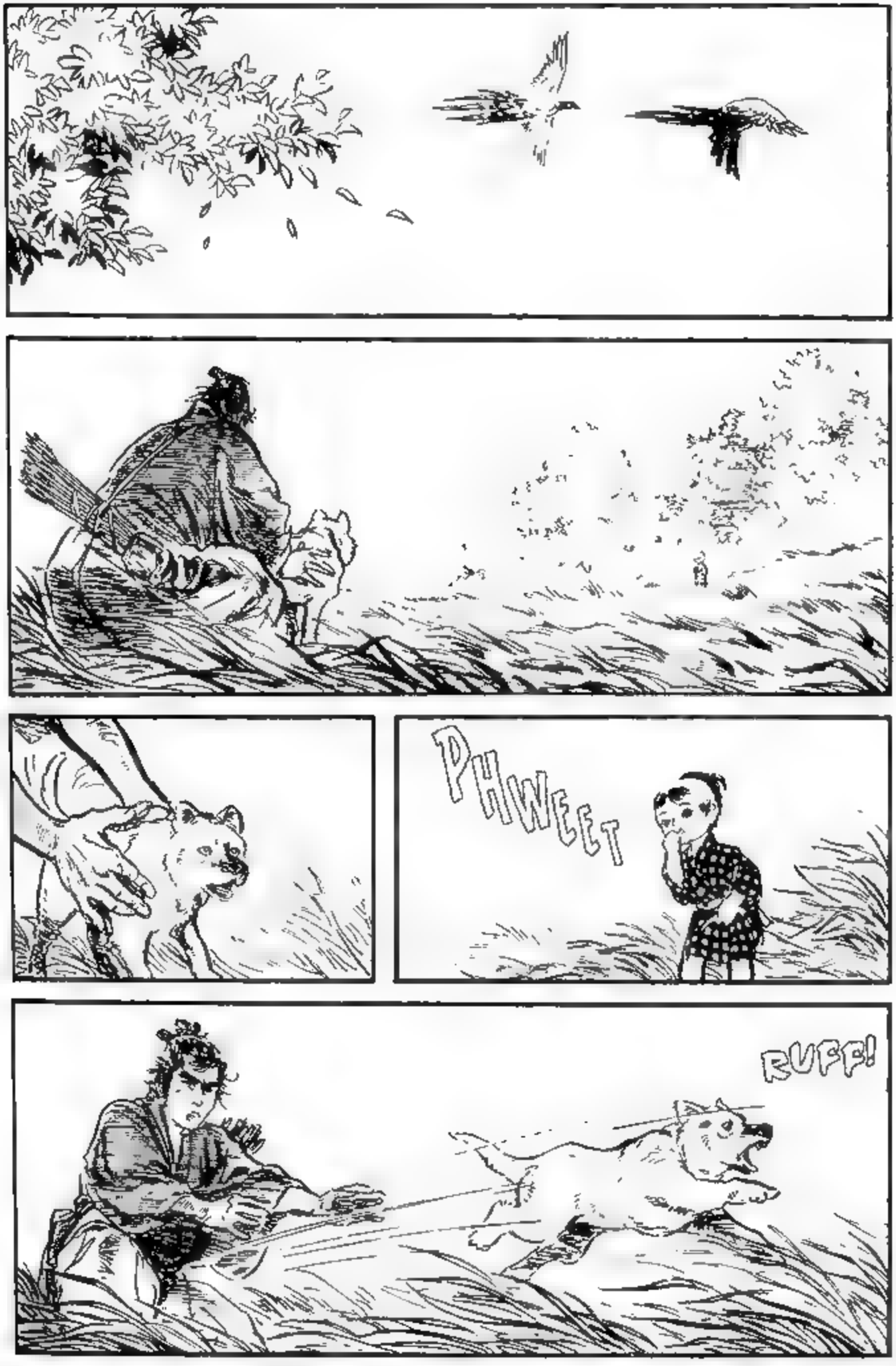
YIPP!
:whine:
:whine:

MNCH
MNCH

FSSST
FSSST

YIPE!
YIPE!


FSST
THUNP
FSST
SPLAT


PHWEET
RUFF!

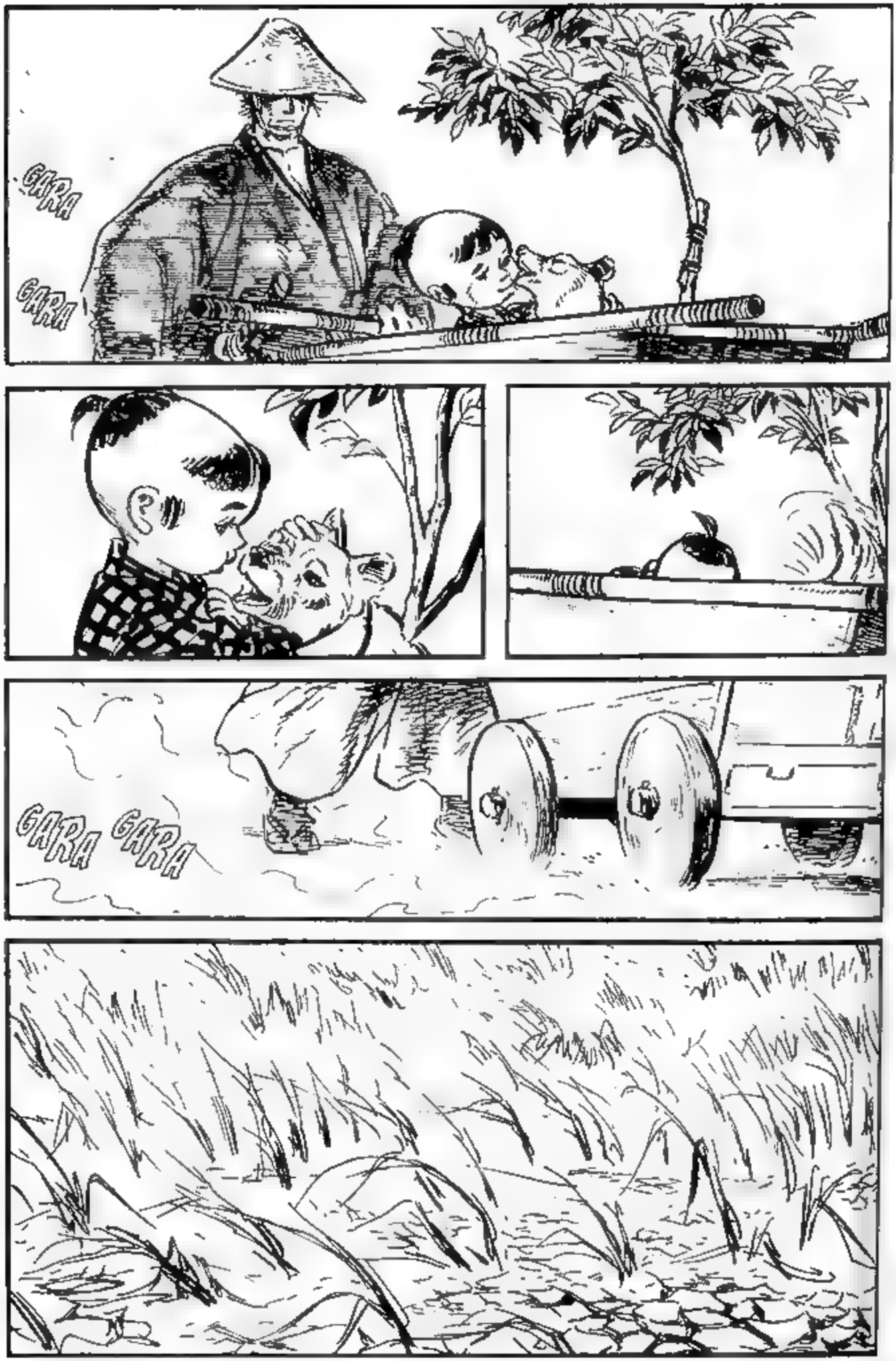
FSST

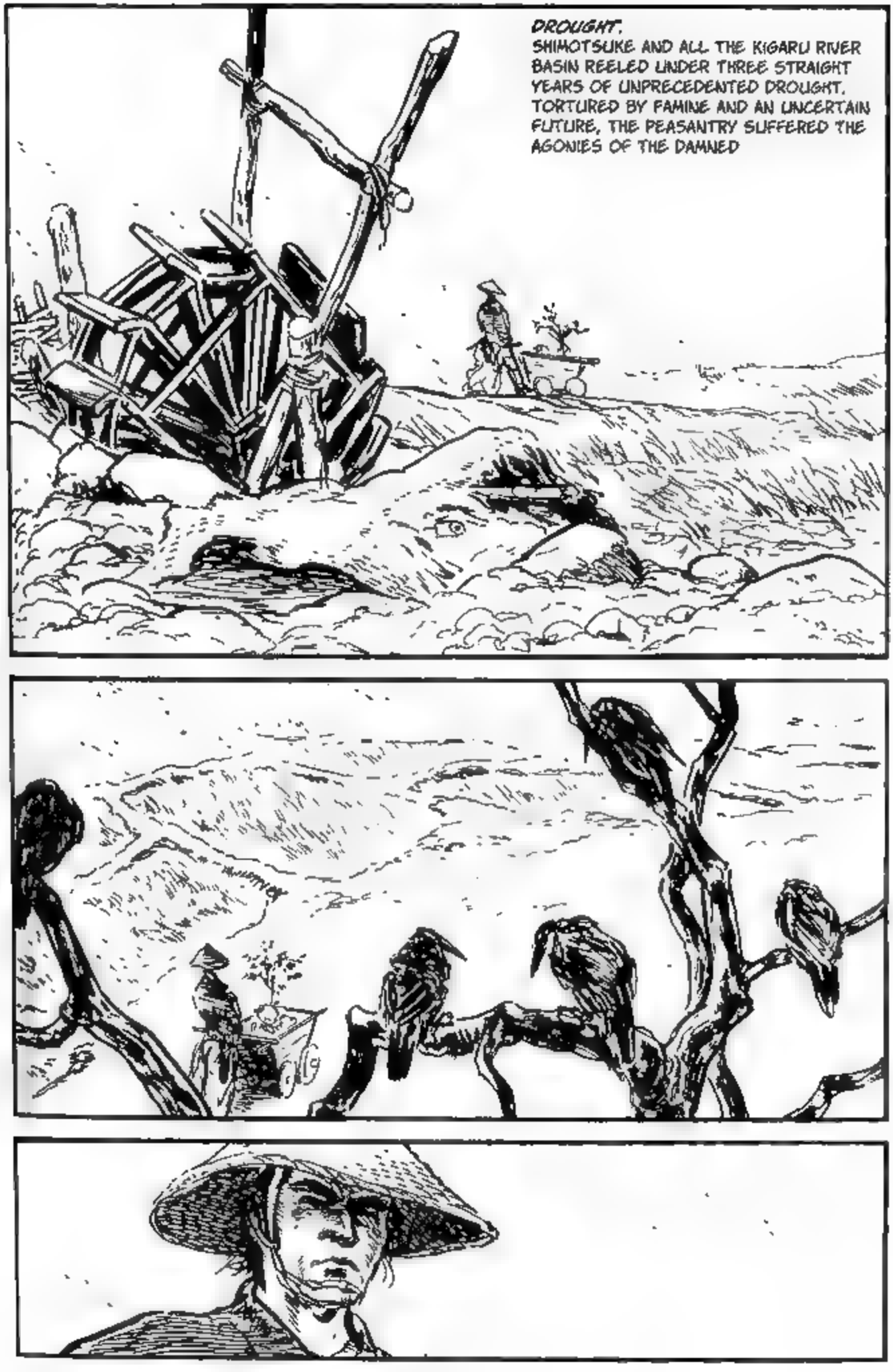
FSST

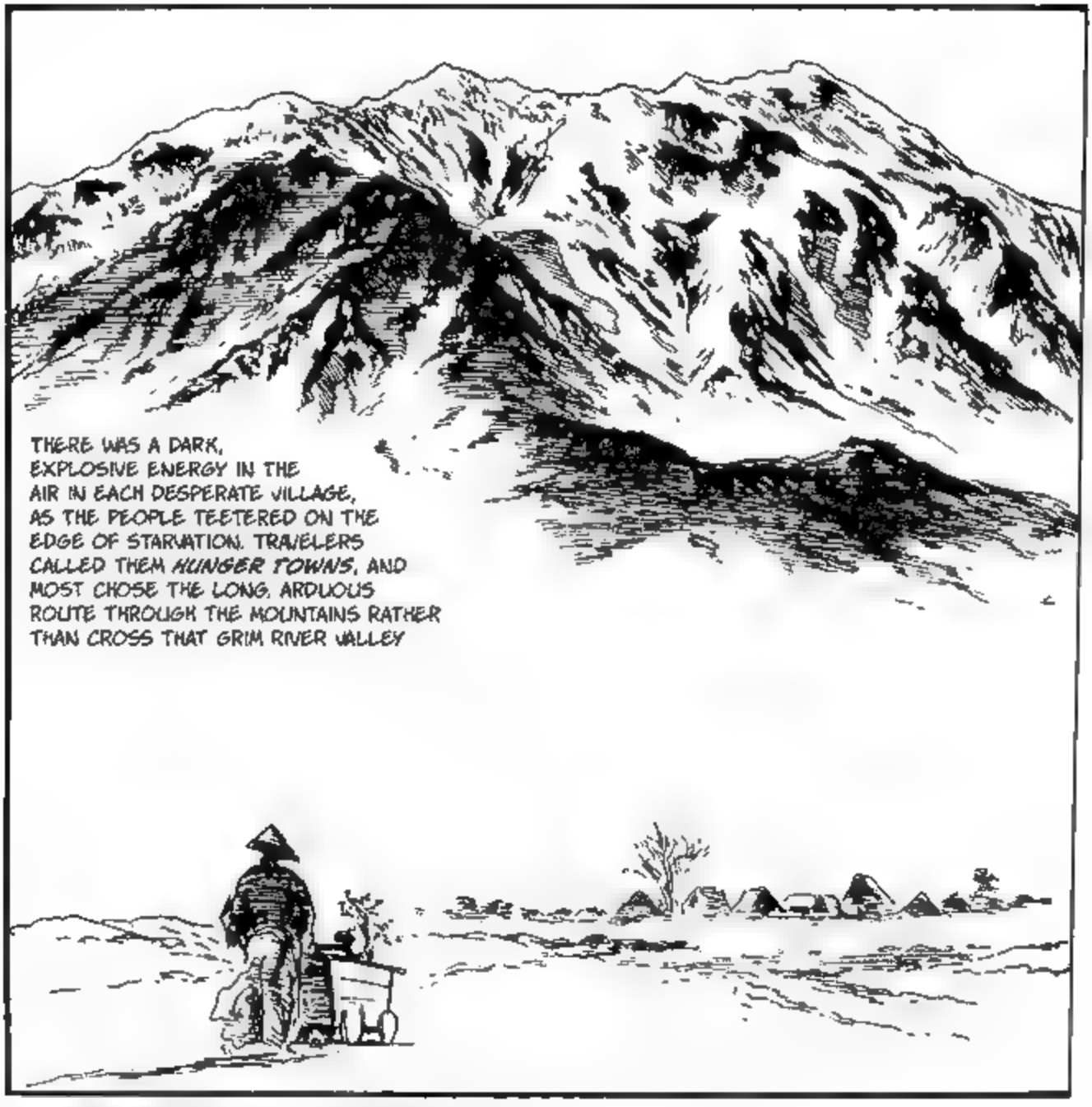
FSST

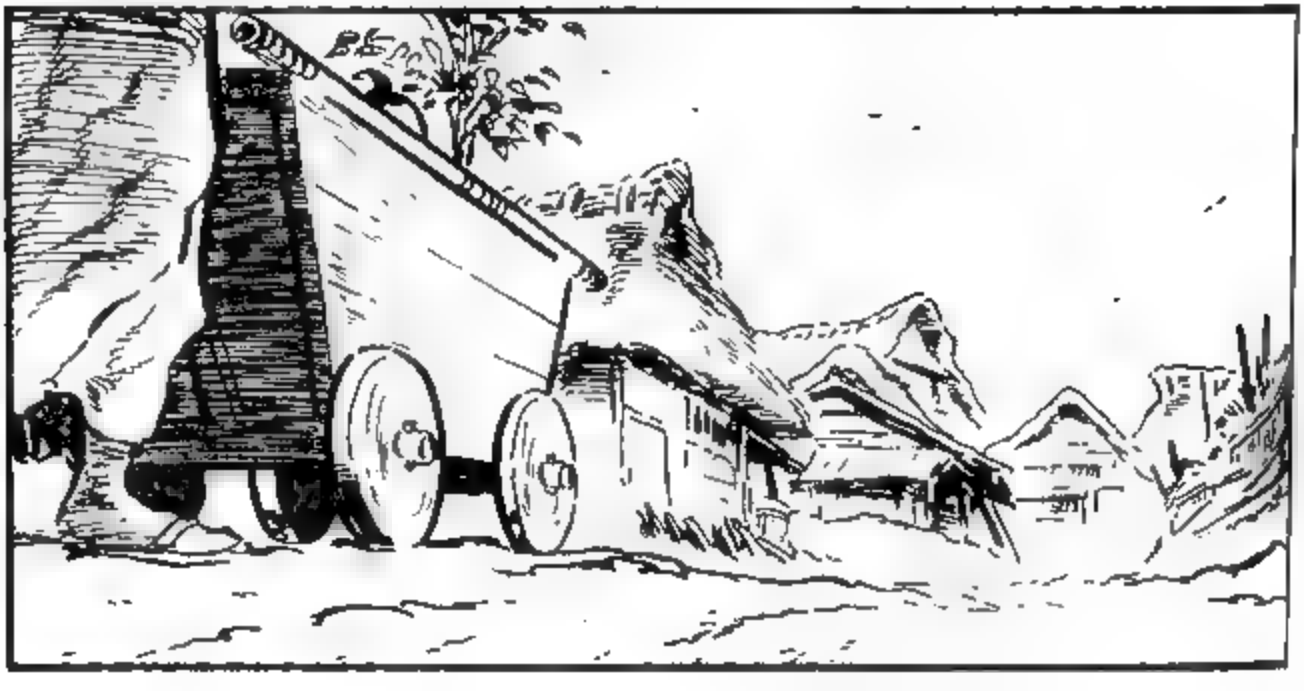
CHNK

A RUDE WOODCUTTER'S HUT. BUT FOR MANY WEEKS, FATHER AND SON HAD CALLED IT HOME.


GARA
GARA
GARA GARA


DROUGHT.
SHIMOTSUKE AND ALL THE KIGARU RIVER BASIN REELED UNDER THREE STRAIGHT YEARS OF UNPRECEDENTED DROUGHT. TORTURED BY FAMINE AND AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE, THE PEASANTRY SUFFERED THE AGONIES OF THE DAMNED


THERE WAS A DARK, EXPLOSIVE ENERGY IN THE AIR IN EACH DESPERATE VILLAGE, AS THE PEOPLE TEETERED ON THE EDGE OF STARVATION. TRAVELERS CALLED THEM *HUNGER TOWNS*, AND MOST CHOSE THE LONG, ARDUOUS ROUTE THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS RATHER THAN CROSS THAT GRIM RIVER VALLEY



GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA

SOMETHIN' ANYTHING. GIMME ME SOMETHIN' TO EAT.
O. O SAMURAI
GAIRA GAIRA
SA SAMURA..
GAIRA GAIRA
RUFF! HEVVH!
RUFF! GRR!

IT .IT'S A DOG!!
GRR RRR!
F-FOOD! THEY'S GOT FOOD!!
RUFF
RUFF!
RAWLFF!
NGRR!
RUFF, ROWF!

TH-THAT DOG GIVE'M TO US TO EAT!

PEOPLE BE STARVIN'..DROPPIN' DEAD ON THEIR FEET..AND YOU'RE PROTECTIN' A DOG?!

RUFF! WURF!

WE-WE'VE ET EVERYTHING THERE IS TO EAT... CHEWIN' GRASS, GNAWIN' ON TREE ROOTS! THERE AIN'T NUTHIN' LEFT. NOT EVEN RATS!

GIVE US THE DOG! WE'RE BEGGIN' YOU!

GRR! RUFF!

THE DOG

I'LL EAT IT!

FOOD FOOD!

LET US EAT...

KSHH

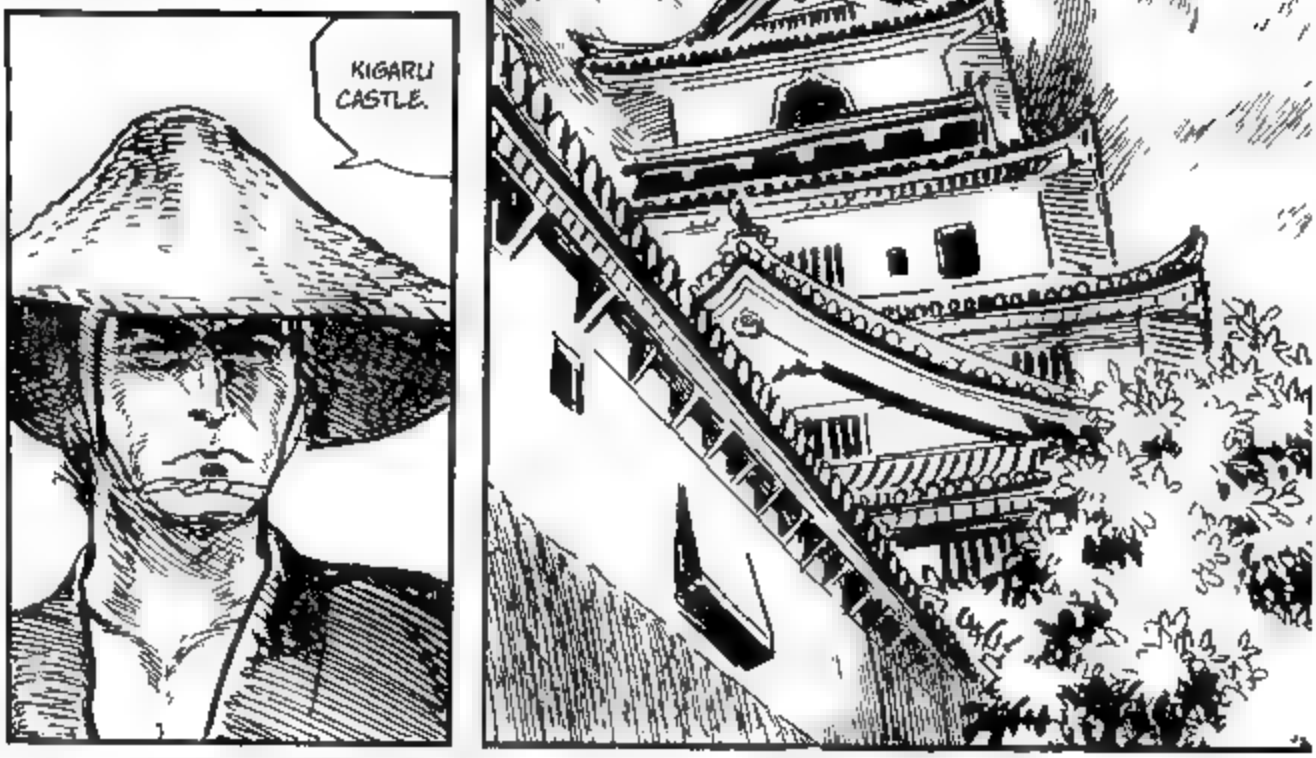
M-MONEY!!

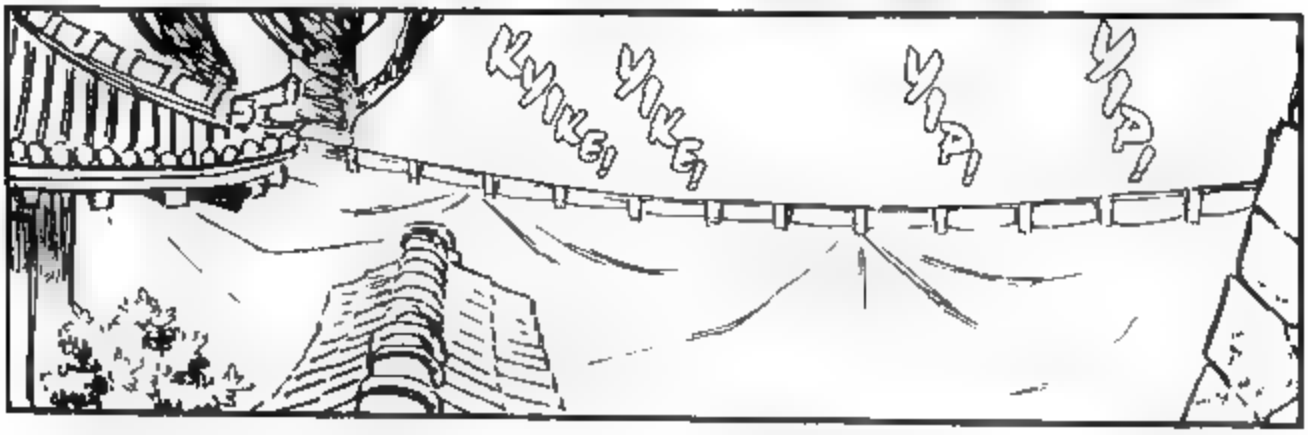
WAAHH!!

GAIRA GAIRA
GAIRA GAIRA
WH-WHERE YE BE HEADIN, KIND SIR..?

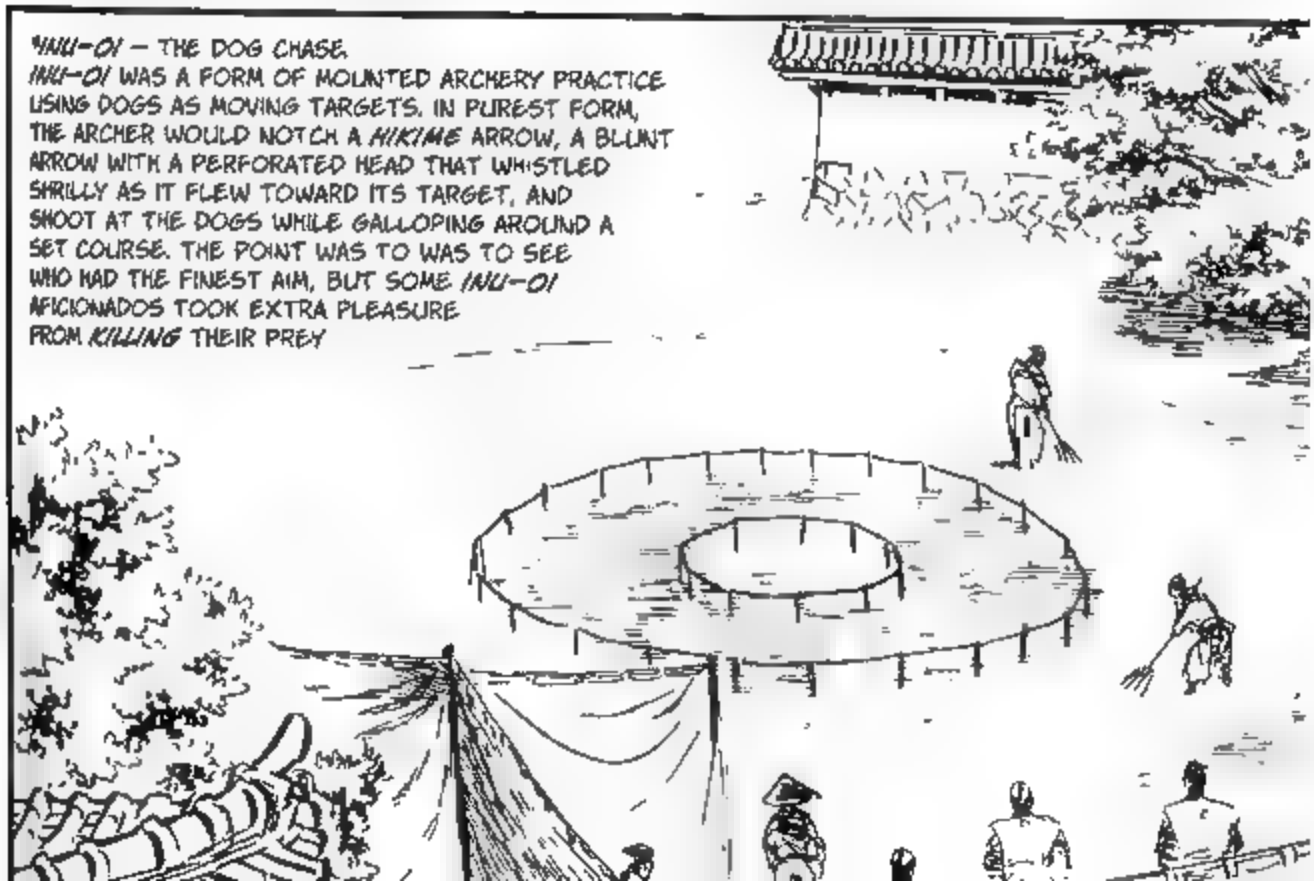
THE CASTLE TOWN BY THE KIGARU RIVER.
I?! D-DON'T GO, SIR! THAT'S WHERE THE DEMONS BE! THE DEMONS WHAT LEAVE US HURTIN' AND STARVIN', NO HOPE FOR TOMORROW.
....
....
THREE YEARS OF DROUGHT, SIR, BUT DOES THE RED DEMON IN THE CASTLE OPEN HIS RICE WAREHOUSES? NO, SIR, NO! INSTEAD HIS MEN STEAL OUR SEED RICE—THE BLOOD OF THE PEASANTS—FOR TAXES!
AND THEM BLUE DEMONS, THEM RICE MERCHANTS, SIR THEY WON'T SELL NOTHIN'! THEY RAISE THEIR PRICES SKY-HIGH, THEY DO!
THE PEASANTS IN ALL TWENTY-SIX VILLAGES OF KIGARU BE PUSHED TO EDGE OF THE GRAVE.. IT'S LIFE OR DEATH, SIR . TERRIBLE THINGS BE AFOOT! TERRIBLE THINGS! TEN DAYS OR LESS!
THERE'LL BE AN IKKI, SIR—A REVOLT! THEM CASTLE DEMONS ARE GONNA DIE AND THAT'S CERTAIN! DON'T YE BE GOING THERE, SIR. YOU'LL GET CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE'N LOSE YOUR LIFE!
AND THAT THERE DOG NO DOGS! NEVER!

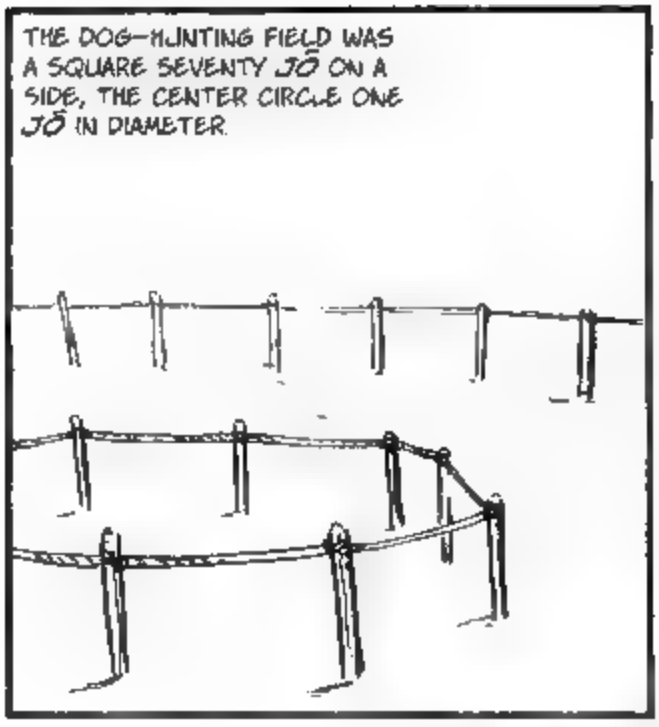
IF YE LOVE THAT PUP SO MUCH YOU'LL THROW AWAY ALL THAT MONEY FOR 'IM, THEN DON'T GO *NEAR* THE CASTLE!
THE *RED DEMON*, HE *LOVES* A DOG HUNT! DAY IN AND DAY OUT, NOTHIN' BUT *DOG HUNTS*, THE *FOOL!*
THAT'S WHY THE PEASANTS STARVE, THE RICE WITHERS. .TAKE THAT DOG THERE, AND THEY'LL *SNATCH* HIM FROM YE FOR *SURE!*
THERE AIN'T A DOG LEFT IN ALL *KIGARU HAN*, NOT A *ONE* THE DEMON'S BEEN BUYING 'EM FROM OTHER *HAN*, AND EVEN *THAT'S* NOT ENOUGH.
LISTEN TO THIS OLD GRANNY'S WORDS, SIR! DON'T YE GO NEAR THAT CASTLE!
GARA
GARA

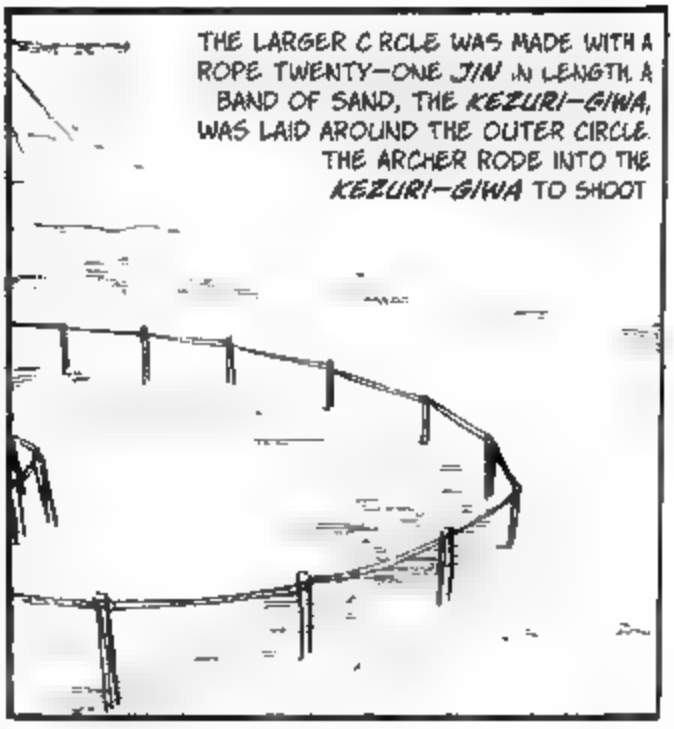




YABU-OI — THE DOG CHASE.
INU-OI WAS A FORM OF MOUNTED ARCHERY PRACTICE USING DOGS AS MOVING TARGETS. IN PUREST FORM, THE ARCHER WOULD NOTCH A *HIKIME* ARROW, A BLUNT ARROW WITH A PERFORATED HEAD THAT WHISTLED SHRILLY AS IT FLEW TOWARD ITS TARGET, AND SHOOT AT THE DOGS WHILE GALLOPING AROUND A SET COURSE. THE POINT WAS TO WAS TO SEE WHO HAD THE FINEST AIM, BUT SOME *INU-OI* AFICIONADOS TOOK EXTRA PLEASURE FROM *KILLING* THEIR PREY

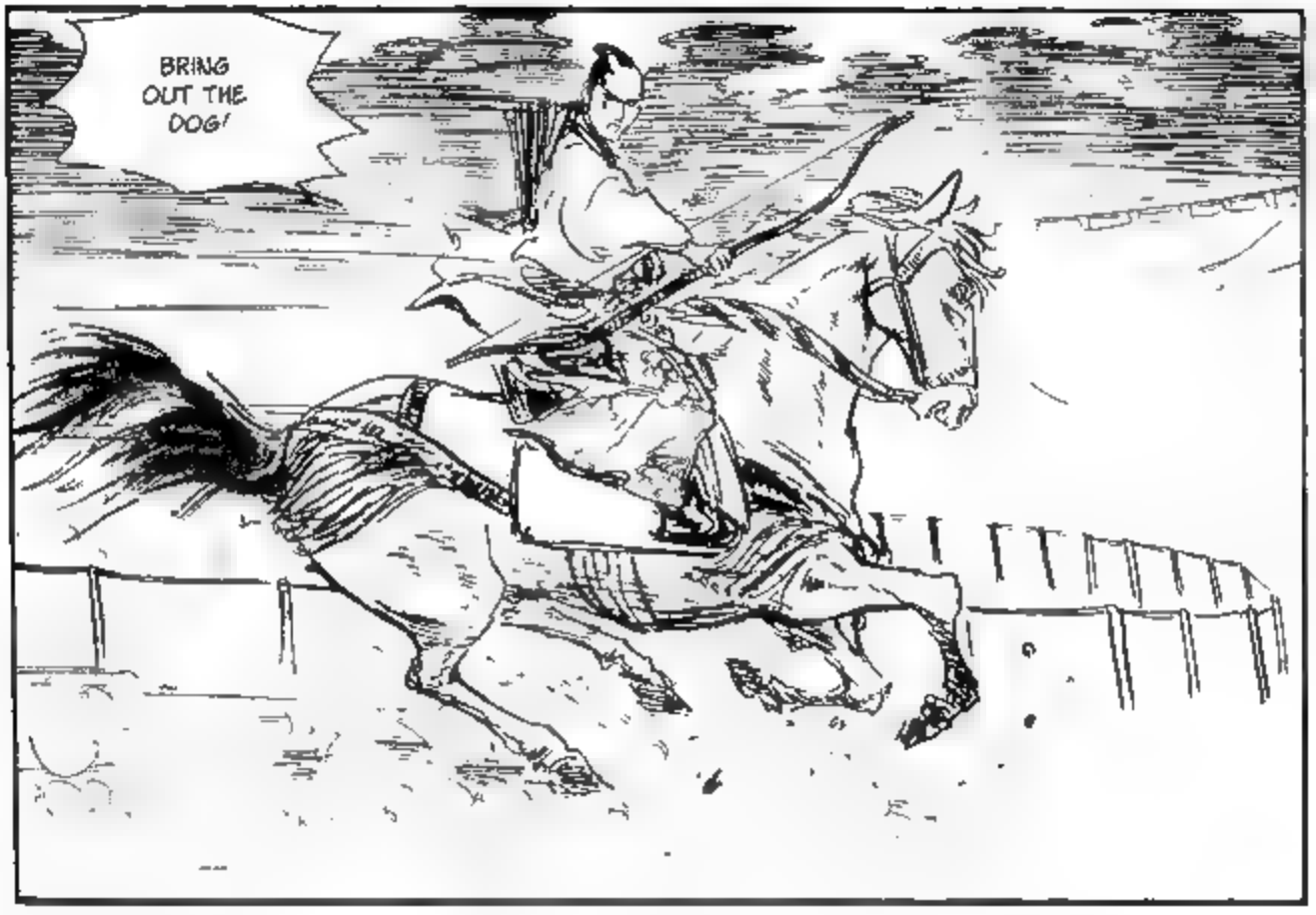



THE DOG-HUNTING FIELD WAS A SQUARE SEVENTY JŌ ON A SIDE, THE CENTER CIRCLE ONE JŌ IN DIAMETER.

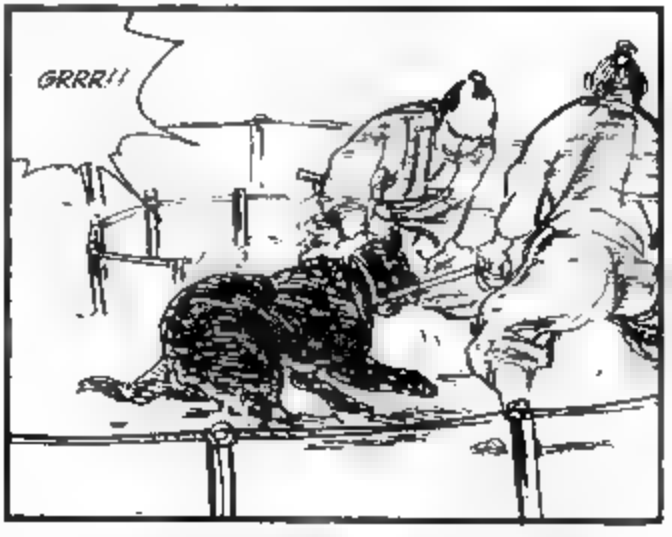

THE LARGER CIRCLE WAS MADE WITH A ROPE TWENTY-ONE JIN IN LENGTH. A BAND OF SAND, THE KEZURI-GIWA, WAS LAID AROUND THE OUTER CIRCLE. THE ARCHER RODE INTO THE KEZURI-GIWA TO SHOOT

THE INU-ŌMONO DOG-HANDLER LED EACH TARGET TO THE CENTRAL CIRCLE AND RELEASED HIM AT A CRY OF "YOSHI!" FROM THE ARCHER.

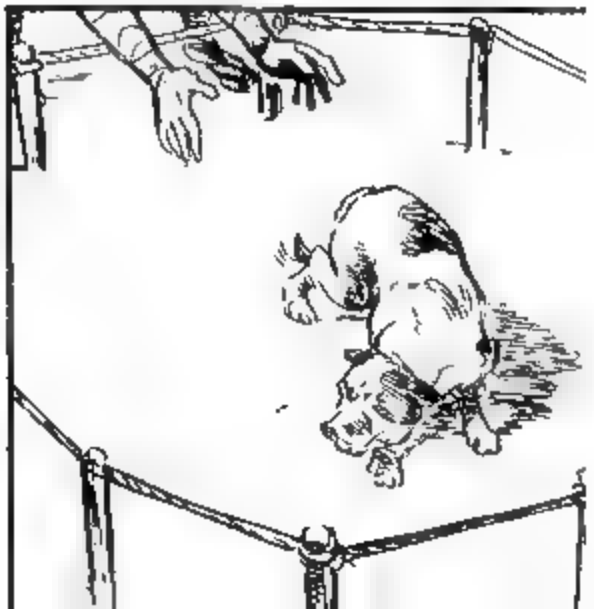
THE DOG WOULD TRY TO LEAP THE ROPE AND ESCAPE. THE CORRECT WAY TO PERFORM INU-OI WAS TO LET THE ARROW FLY BEFORE THE DOG FLED THE OUTER CIRCLE, CATCHING IT AS IT LEAPT THE ROPE.


BRING OUT THE DOG!

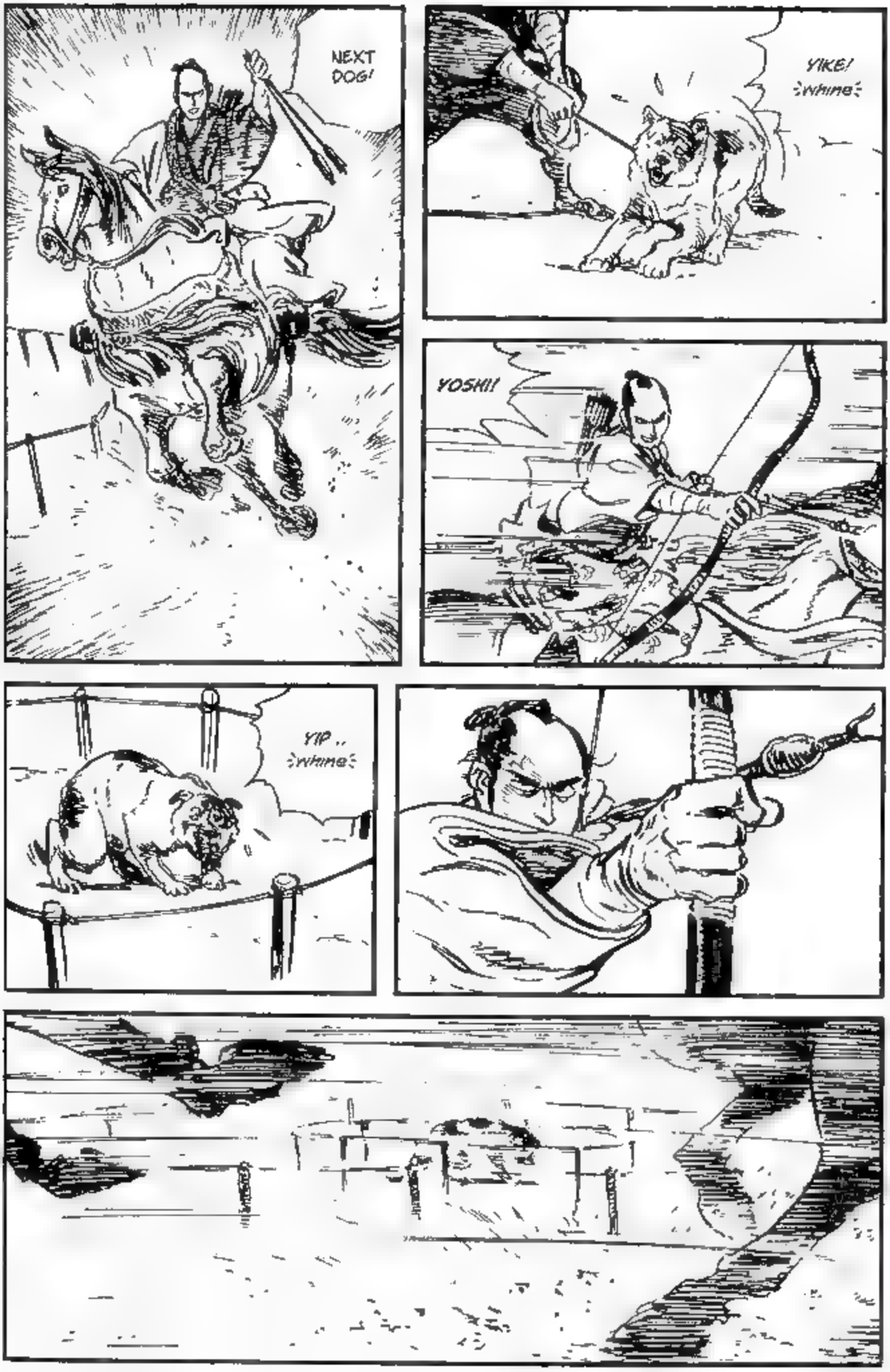
URRR GRRR

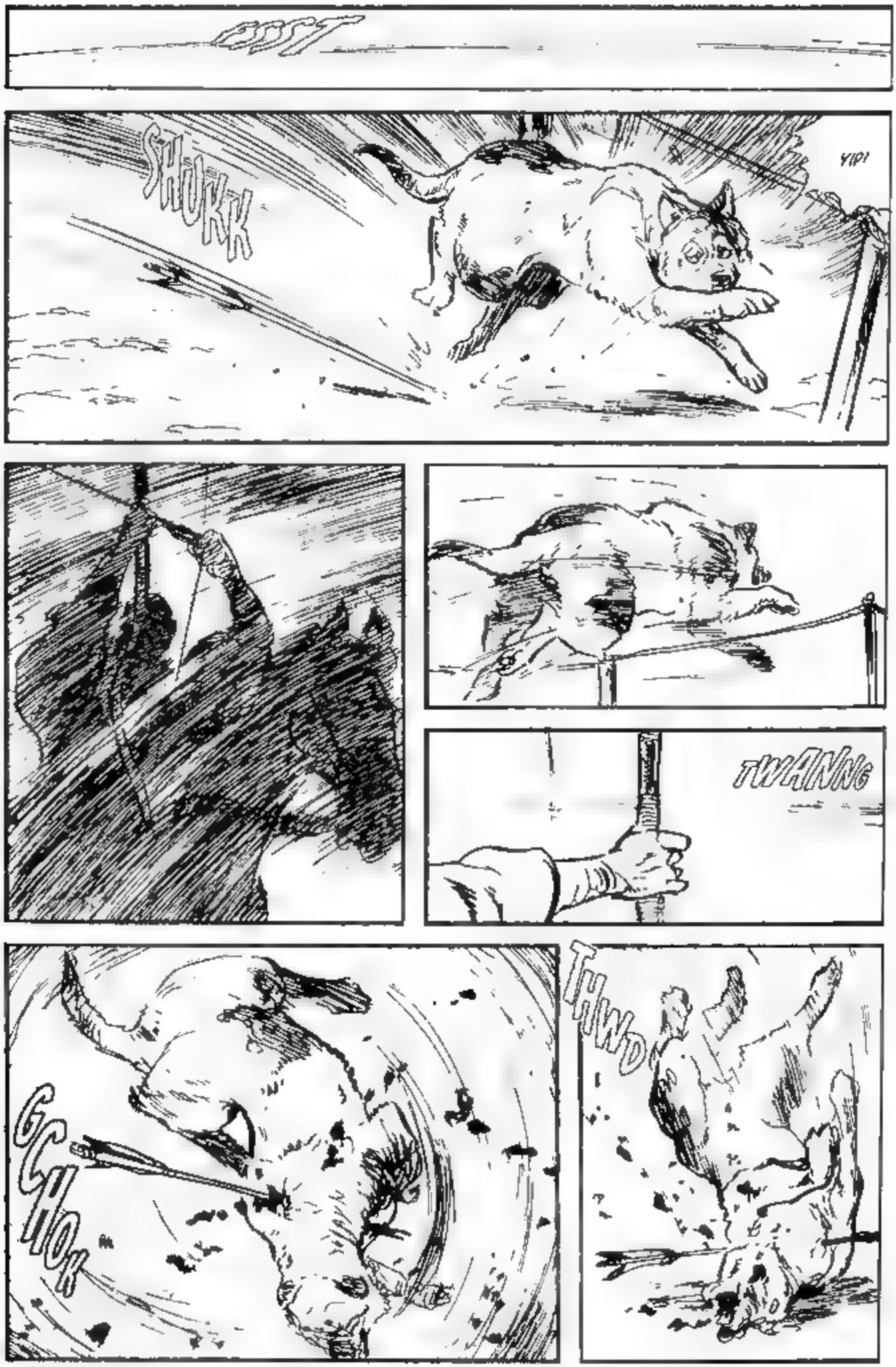

GRRR!!

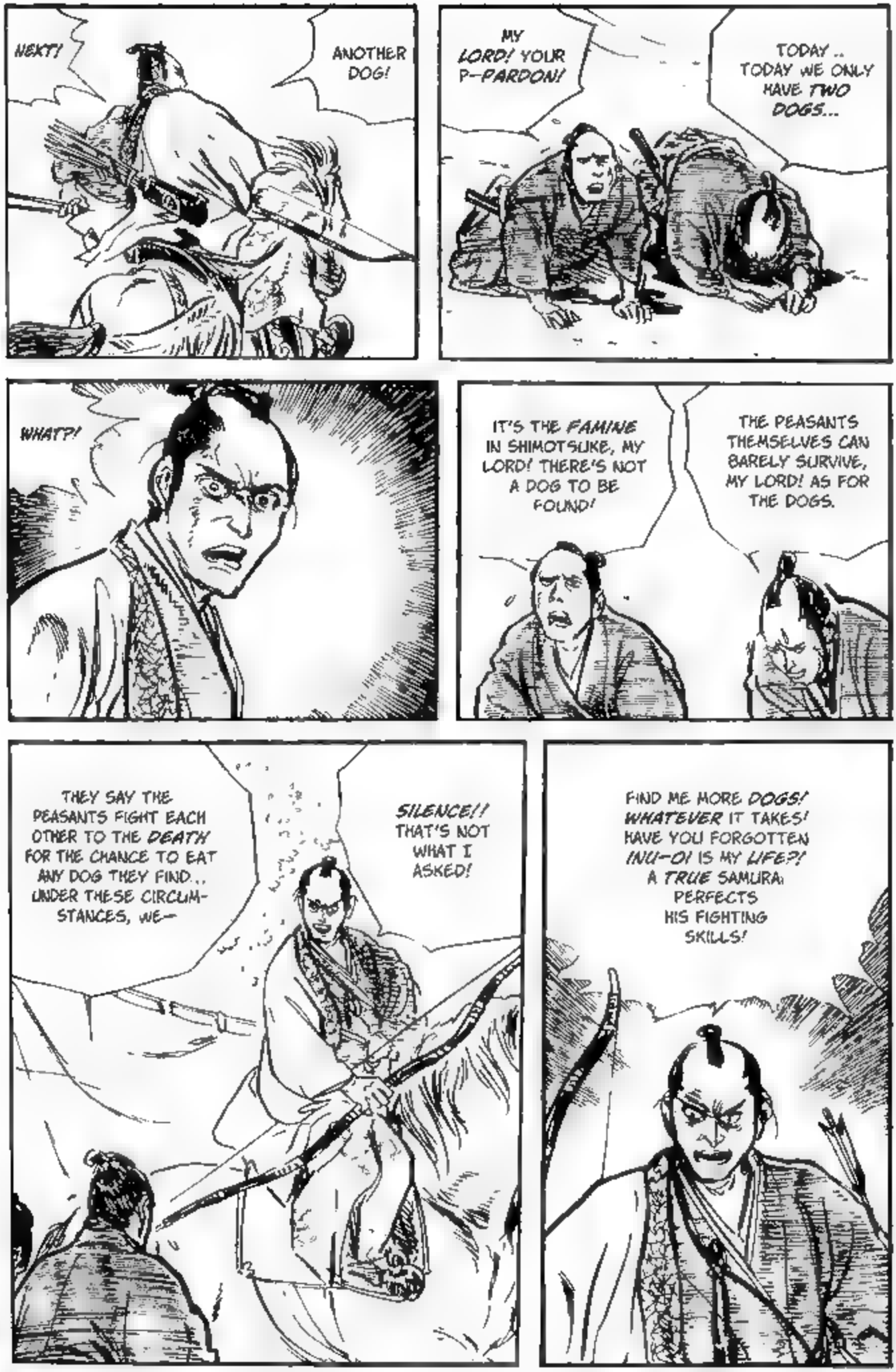
YOSH!!



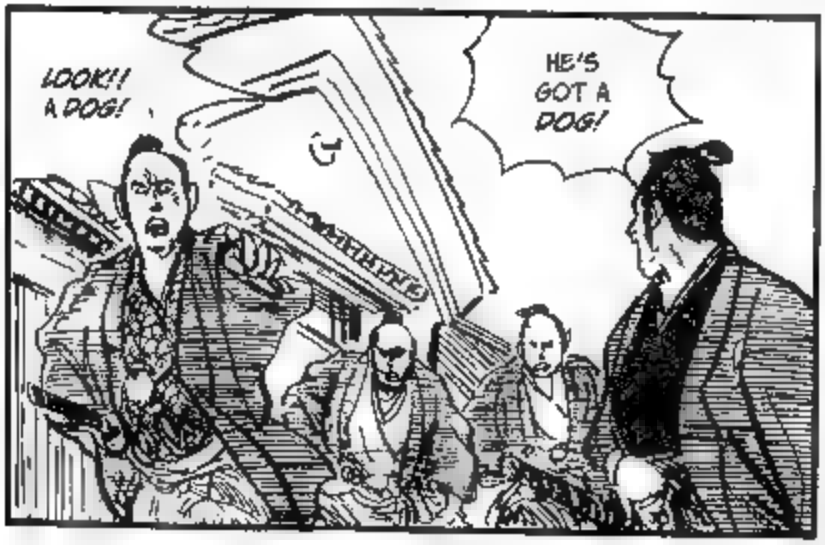
GREFF!
TWANNG
GRRKK!


NEXT DOG!
YIKE! :whine:
YOSH!!
YIP.. :whine:


SHUKK
YIP!
TWANNG
GHOK
THWD

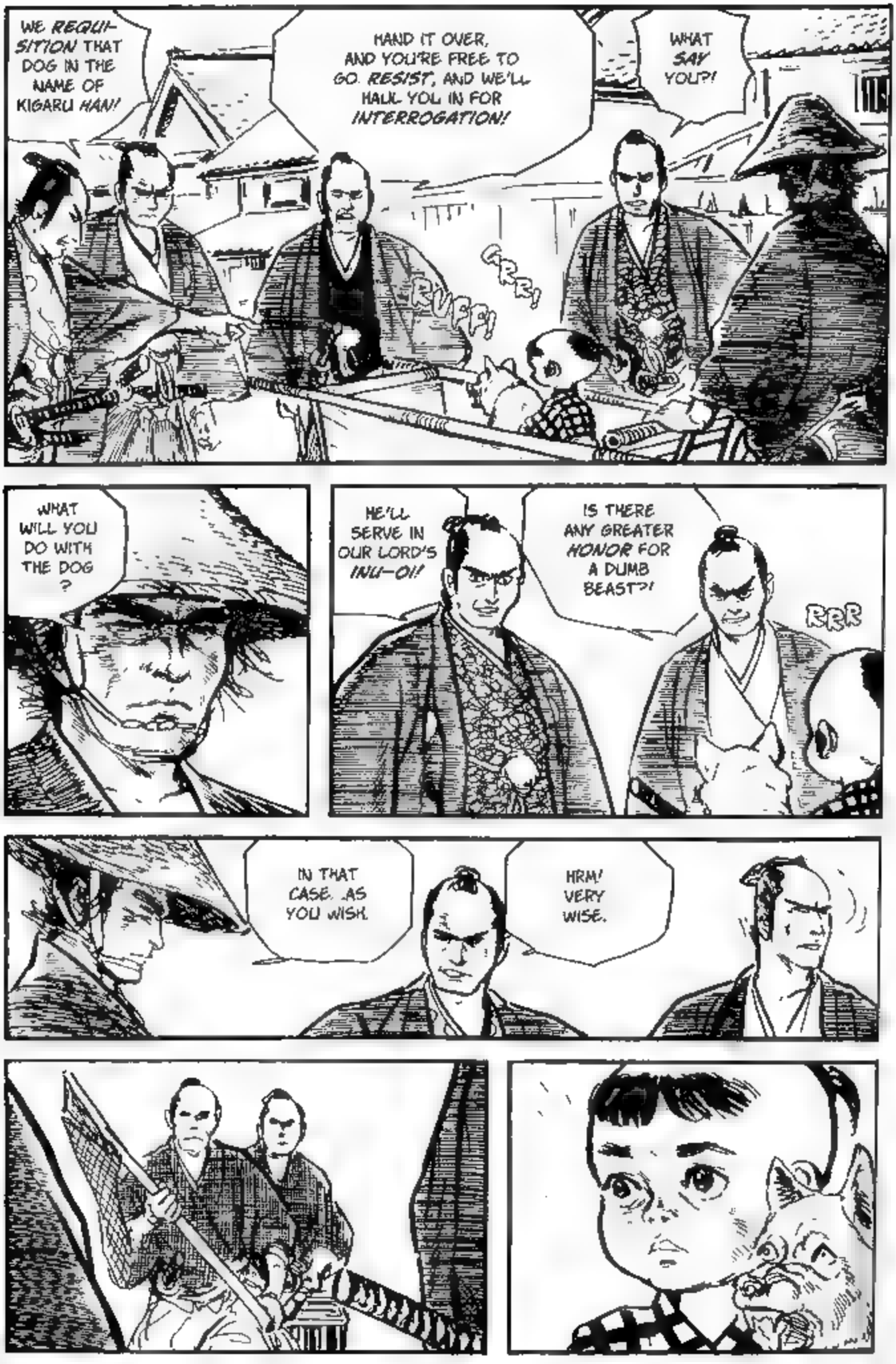

NEXT!
ANOTHER DOG!
MY LORD! YOUR P-PARDON!
TODAY .. TODAY WE ONLY HAVE TWO DOGS...
WHAT?!
IT'S THE FAMINE IN SHIMOTSUKE, MY LORD! THERE'S NOT A DOG TO BE FOUND!
THE PEASANTS THEMSELVES CAN BARELY SURVIVE, MY LORD! AS FOR THE DOGS.
THEY SAY THE PEASANTS FIGHT EACH OTHER TO THE DEATH FOR THE CHANCE TO EAT ANY DOG THEY FIND.. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, WE—
SILENCE!! THAT'S NOT WHAT I ASKED!
FIND ME MORE DOGS! WHATEVER IT TAKES! HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN INU-OI IS MY LIFE?! A TRUE SAMURAI PERFECTS HIS FIGHTING SKILLS!

ARE YOU TRYING TO KEEP ME FROM MY DUTY?!
N— NO, MY LORD!
DOGS!! BRING ME DOGS!
KRAKK
IF YOU DON'T, I'LL USE THOSE DAMN PEASANTS FOR TARGETS!
TELL THEM THAT! TELL THEM I WANT DOGS!!
KRAKK
GET ME MORE DOGS!


LOOK!! A DOG!
HE'S GOT A DOG!

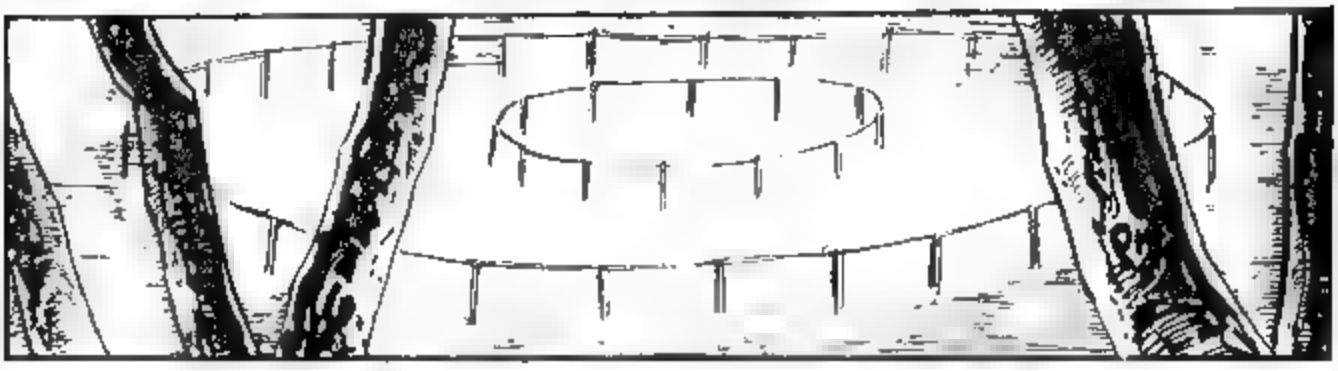
BRR...

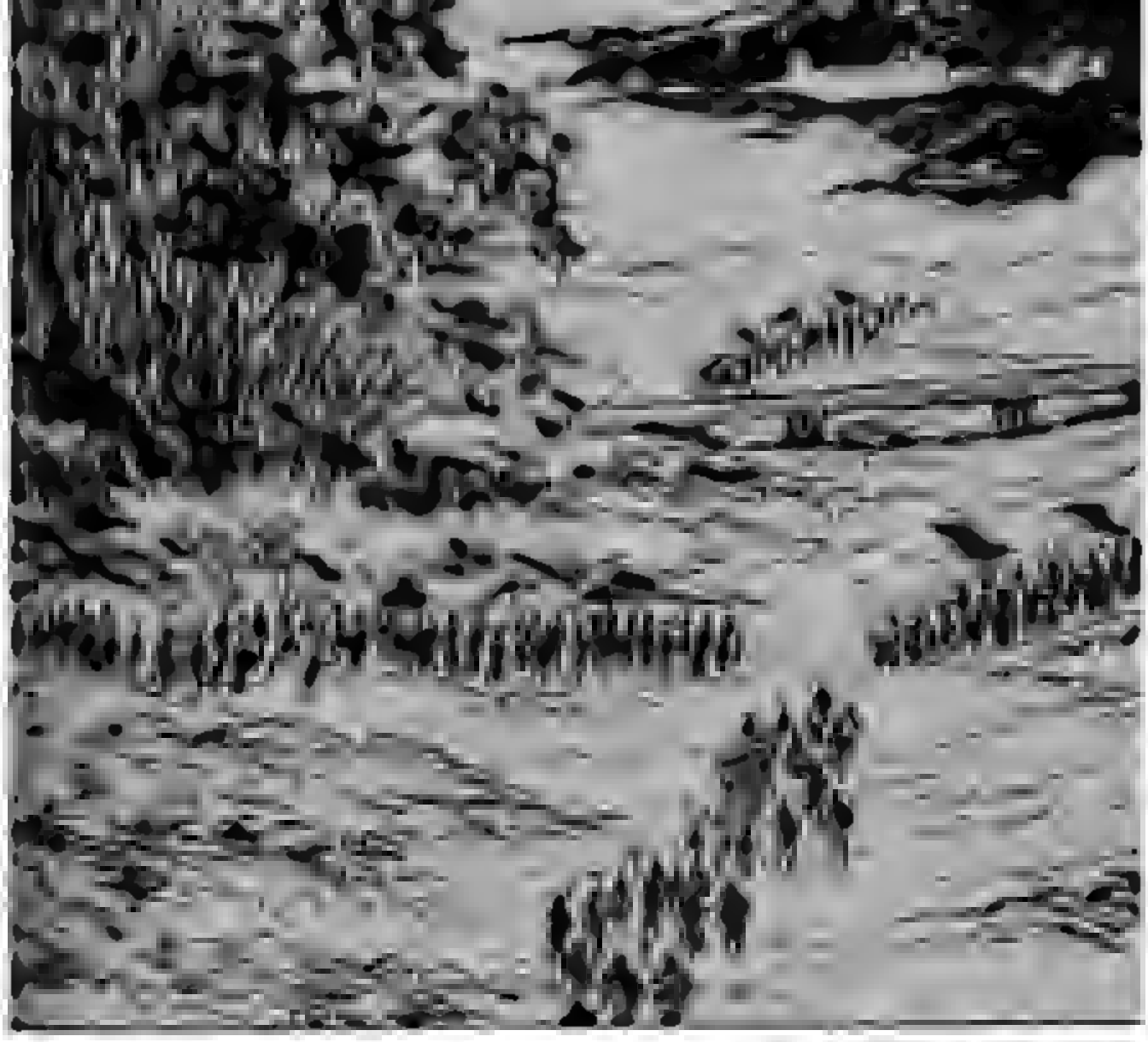
HAND OVER THAT DOG!
....
....

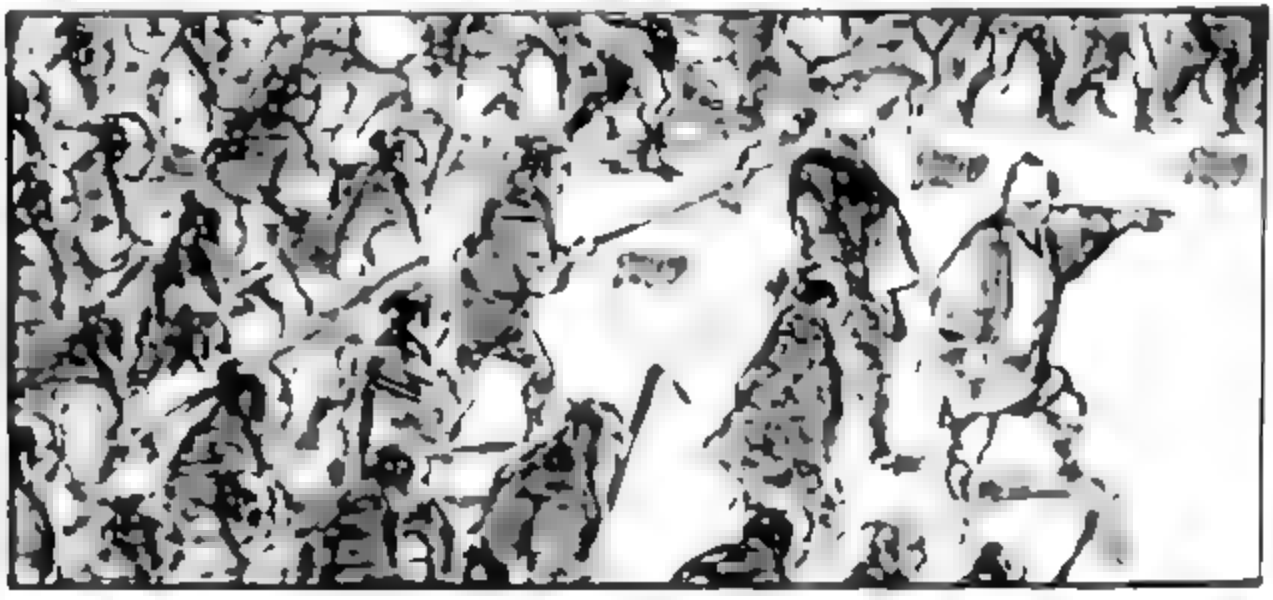

WE REQUISITION THAT DOG IN THE NAME OF KIGARU HAN!
HAND IT OVER, AND YOU'RE FREE TO GO. RESIST, AND WE'LL HAUL YOU IN FOR INTERROGATION!
WHAT SAY YOU?!
GRR!
RUFF!
WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THE DOG ?
HE'LL SERVE IN OUR LORD'S INU-OI!
IS THERE ANY GREATER HONOR FOR A DUMB BEAST?!
RRR
IN THAT CASE, AS YOU WISH.
HRM! VERY WISE.

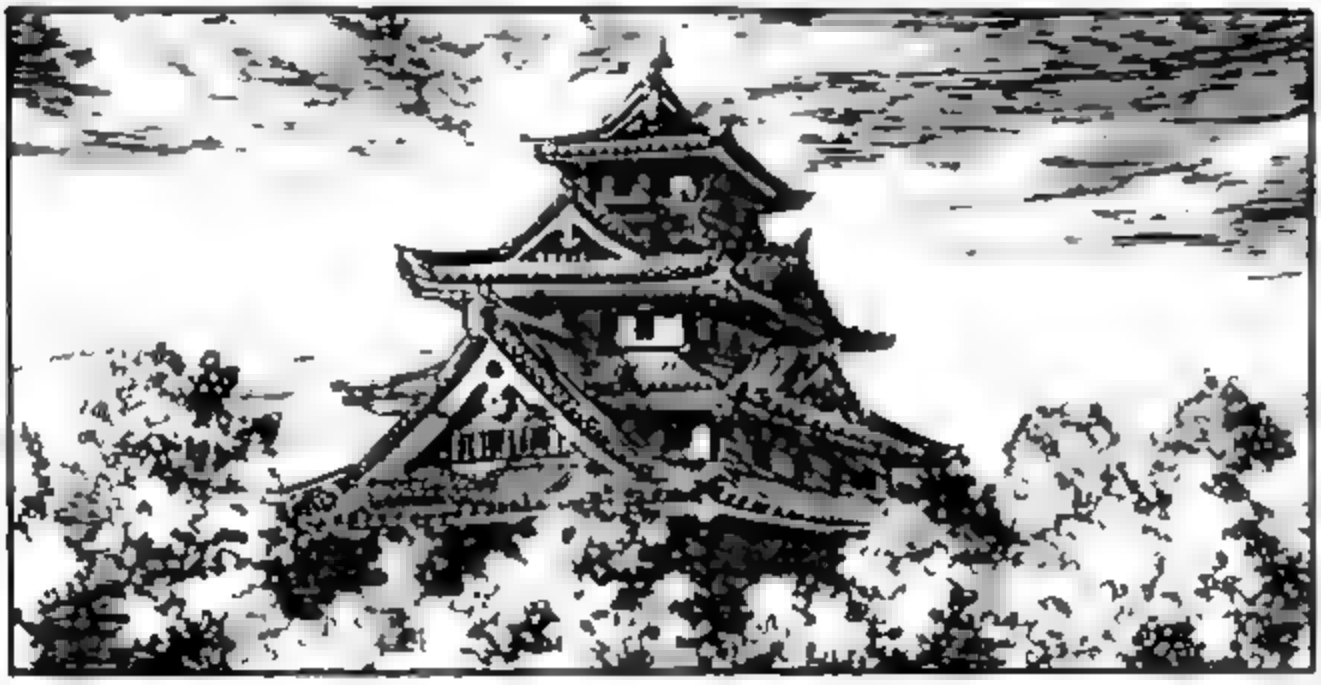
RUFF!
RUFF!
REAFF!
ROWFF!
FWSSK
ROWFF!
GRR!
DAIGORO
YIPP!
RUFF!
ROWFF!
RUFF!
GRR!

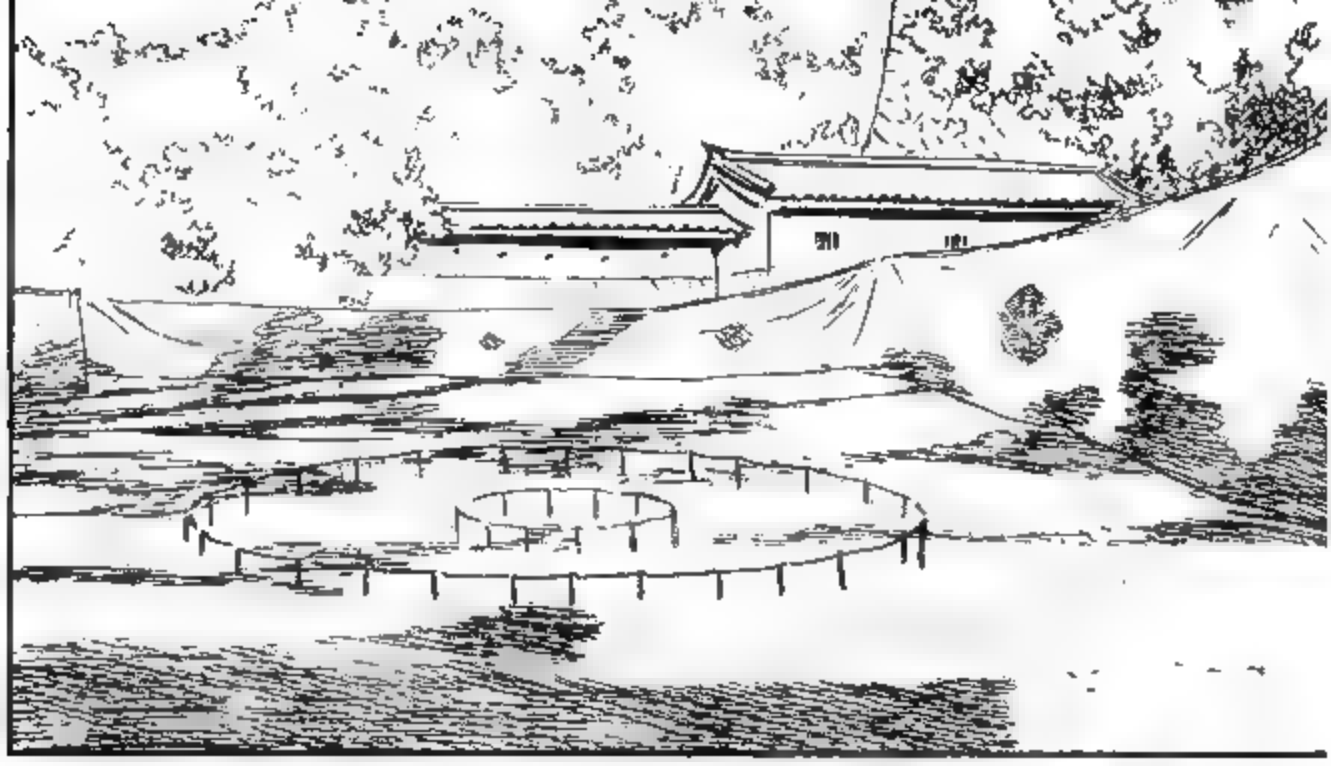
DAIGORO!
BOWFF
BUFF
HRUFF
BOWFF
BUFF
HRUFF
BOWFF
BUFF
HRUFF
ROWFF
BAWFF
BUFF
BUFF
GARA
GARA

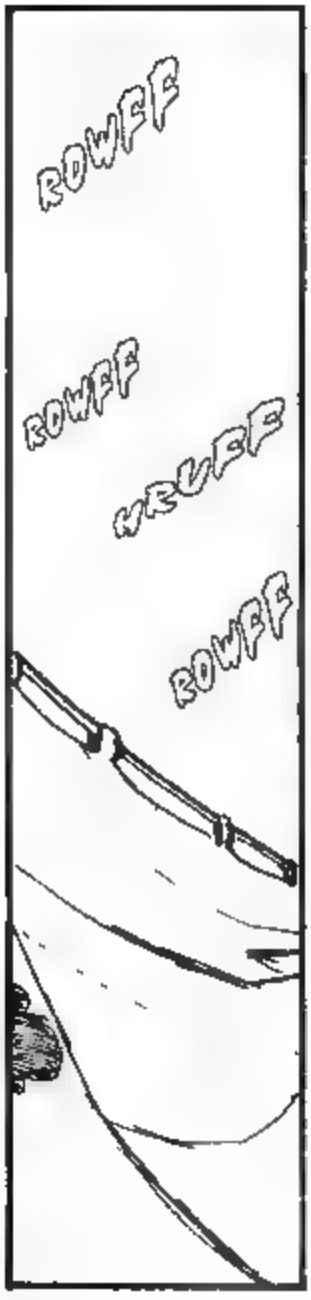


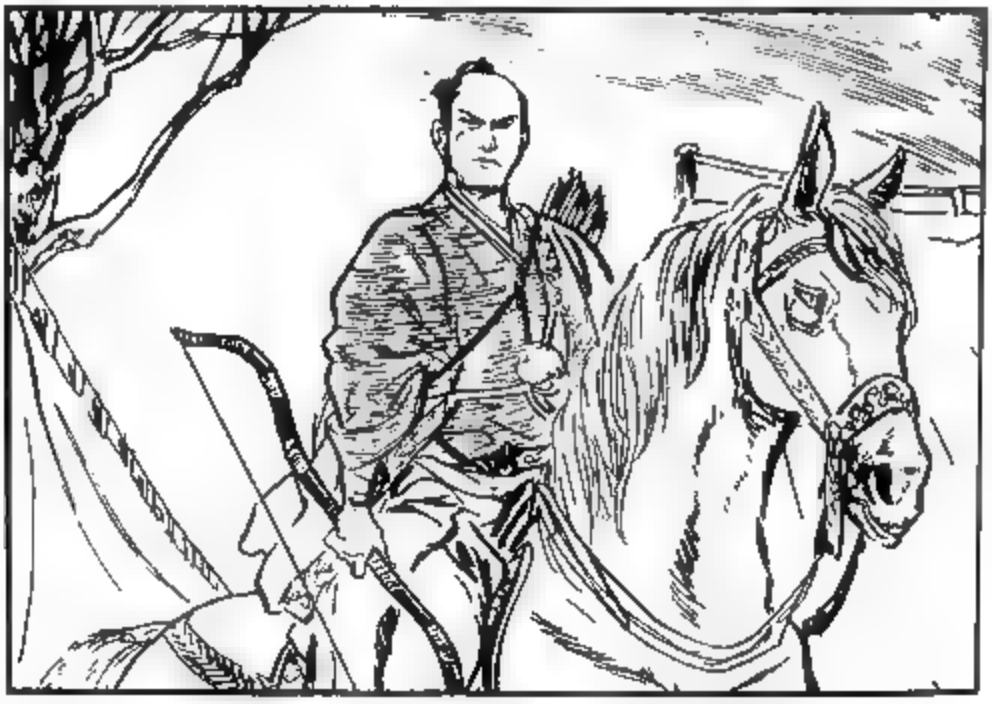


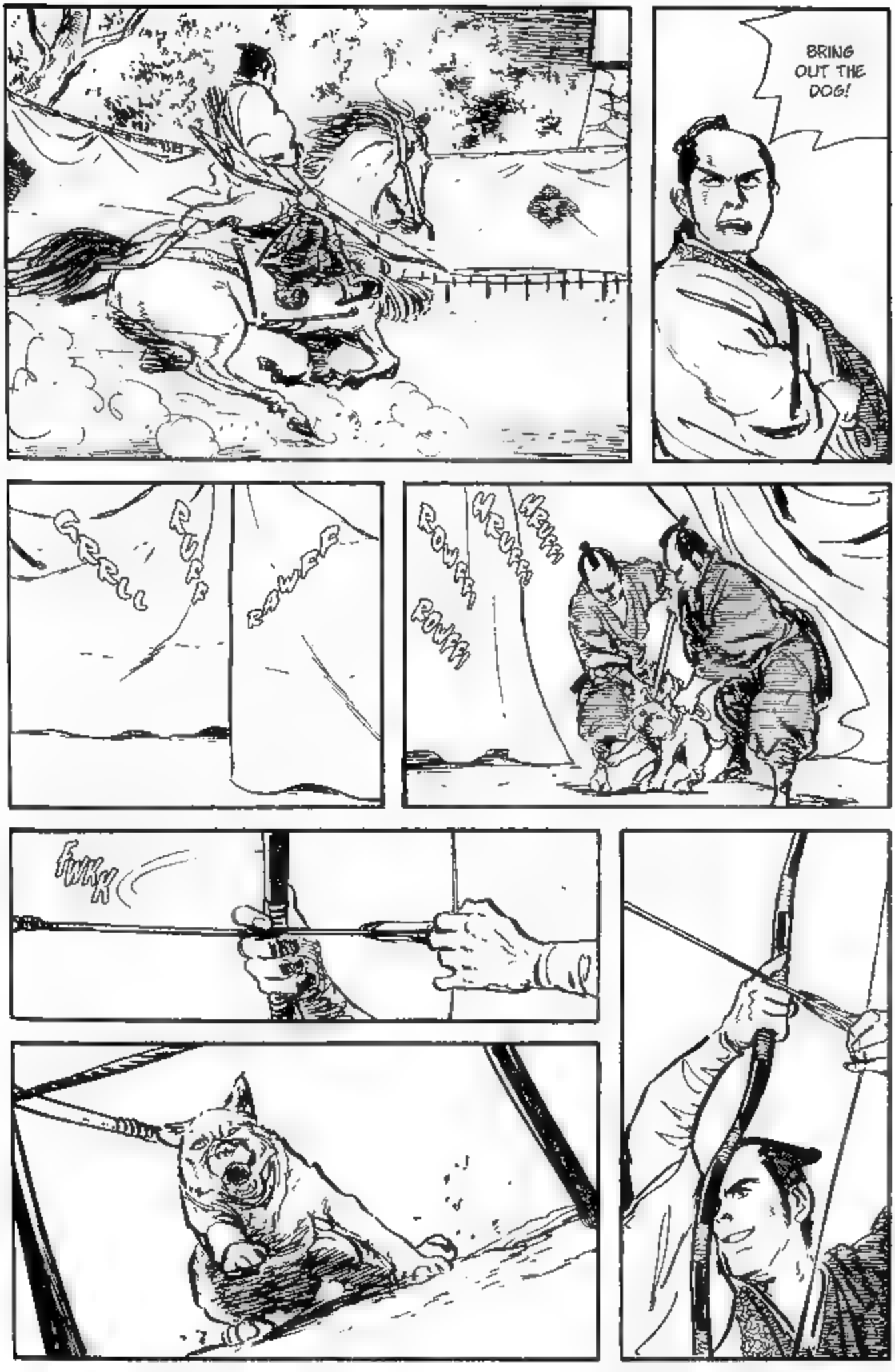


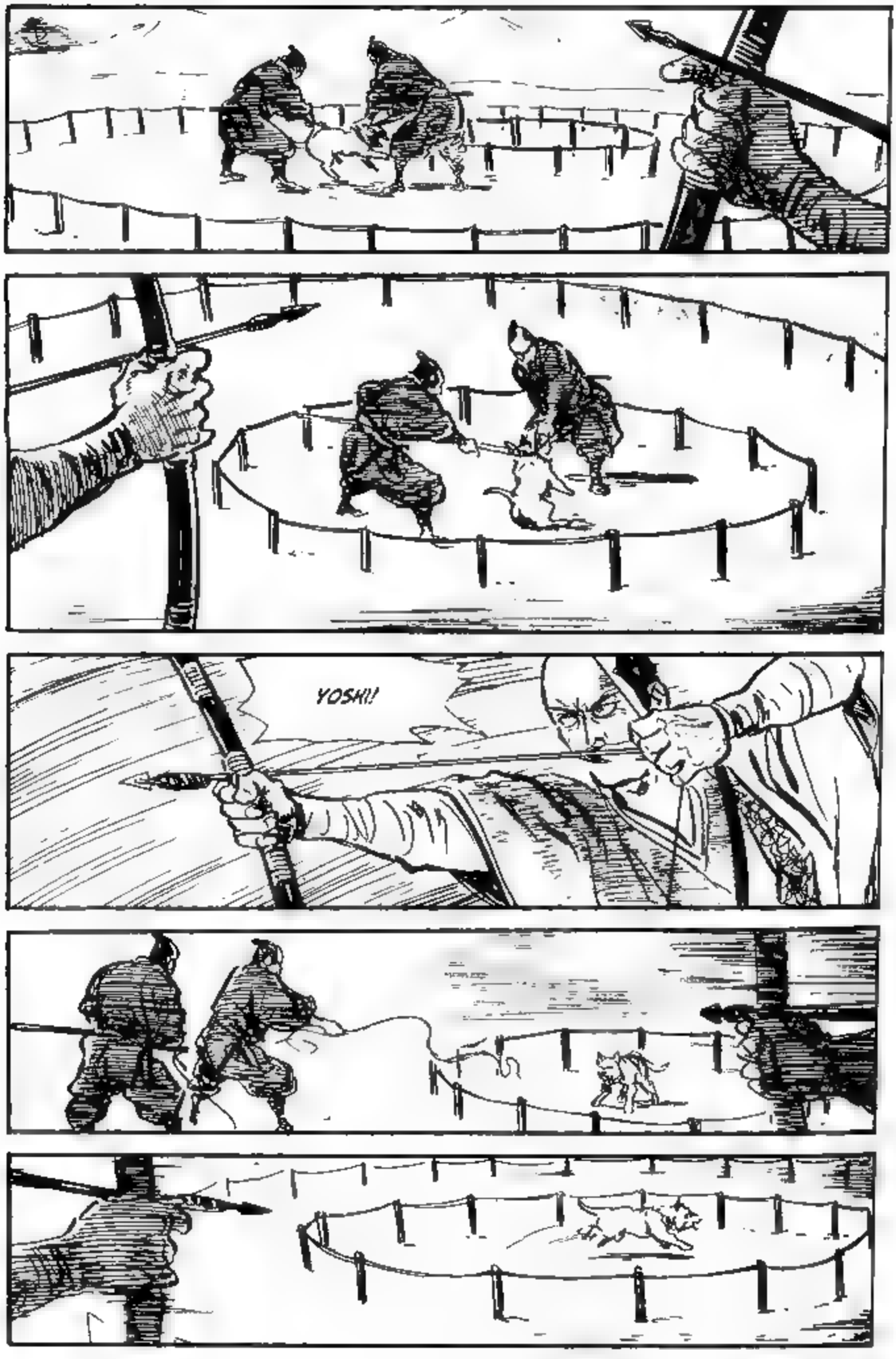


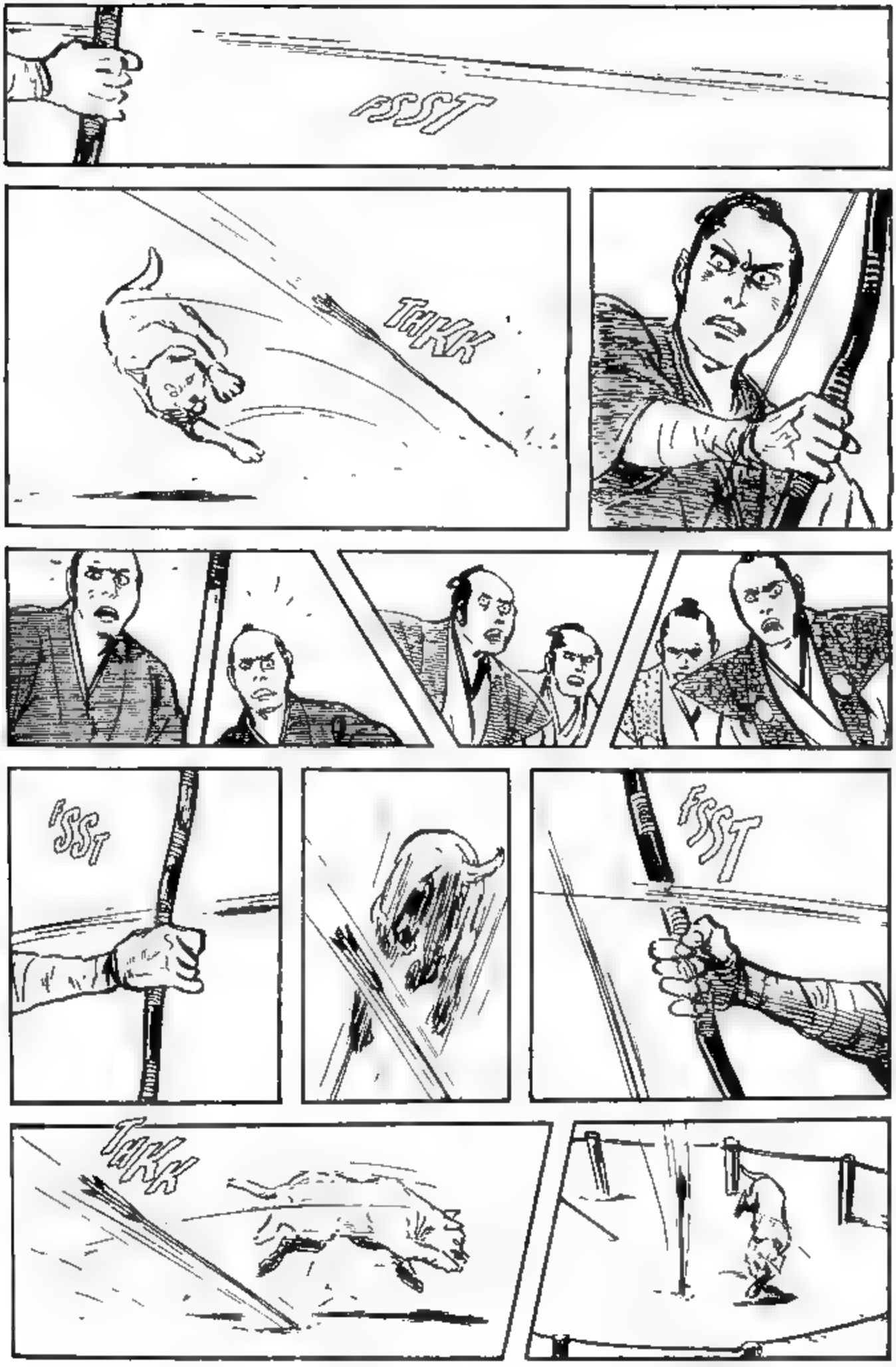



ROWFF
ROWFF
GRUFF
ROWFF

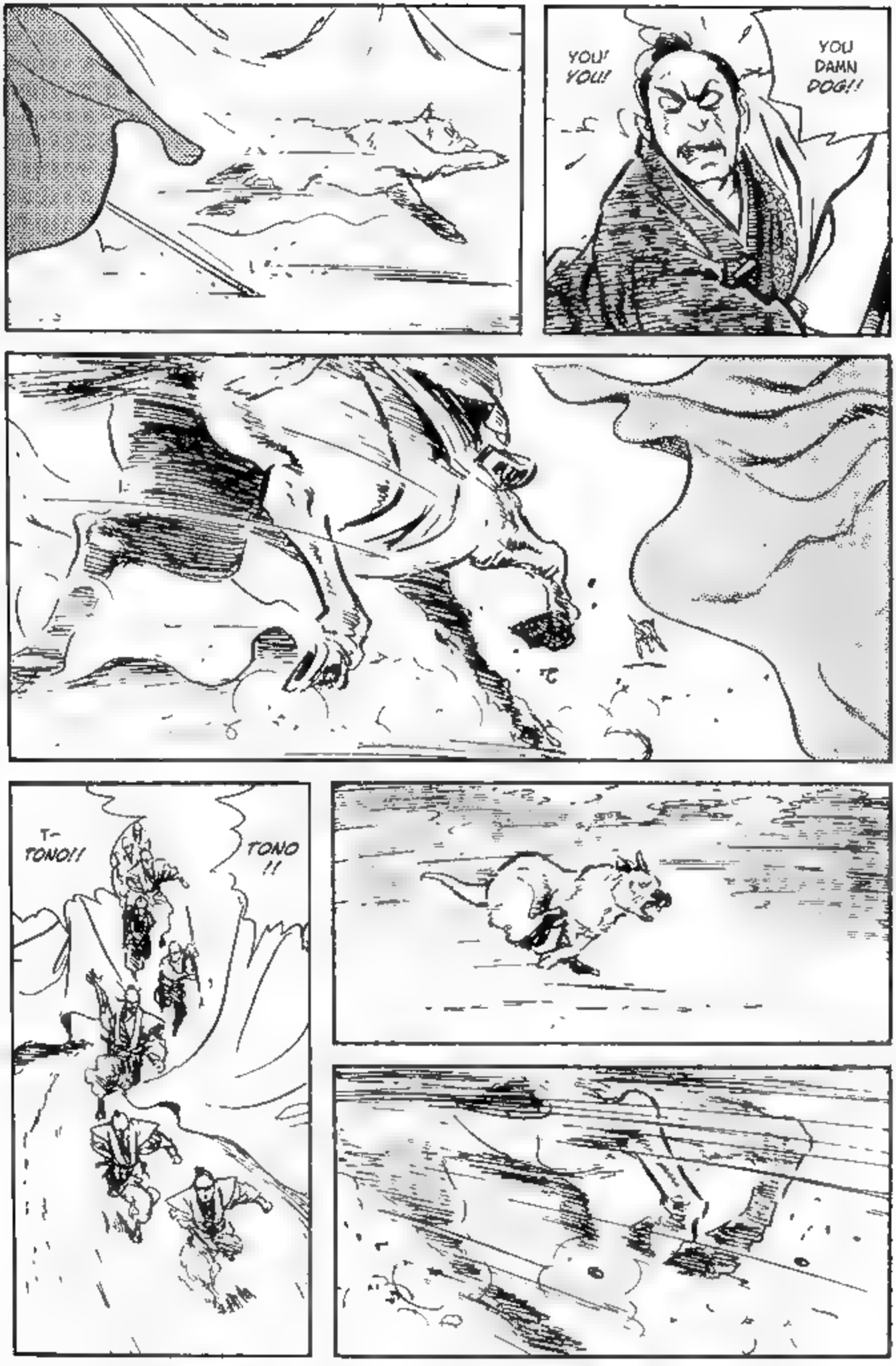



BRING OUT THE DOG!
GRRLL
RUFF
RAWFF
HRUFF
HRUFF
ROWFF
ROWFF
FWKK

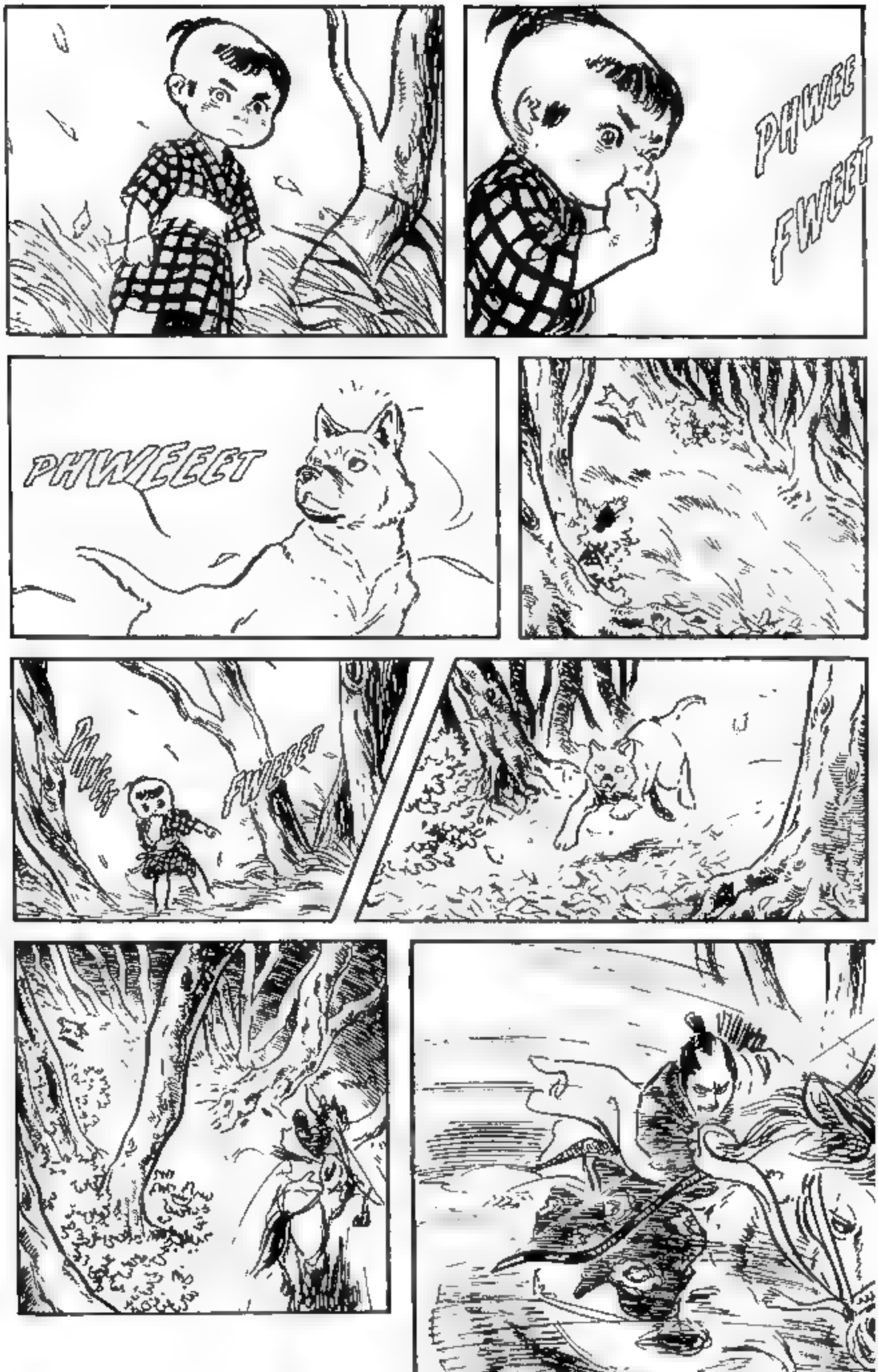

YOSHI!

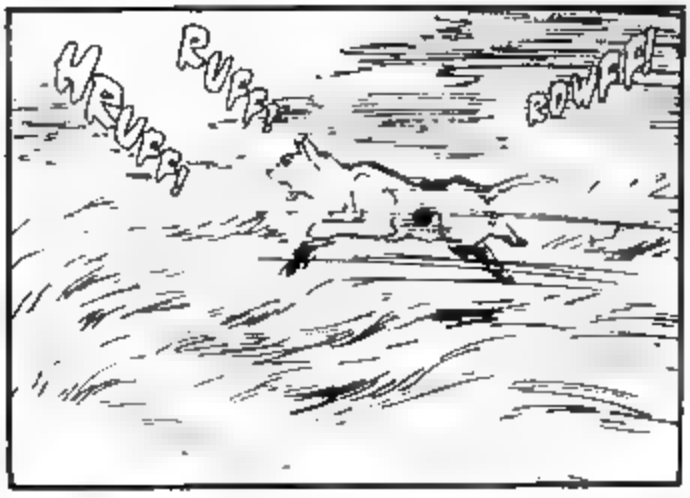

FSSST
THKK
FSST
FSST
FSST
THKK

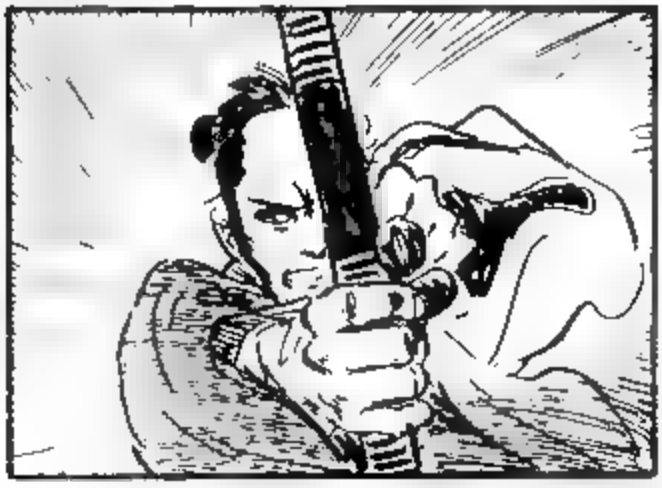
RRNG!!
SSST
TOK

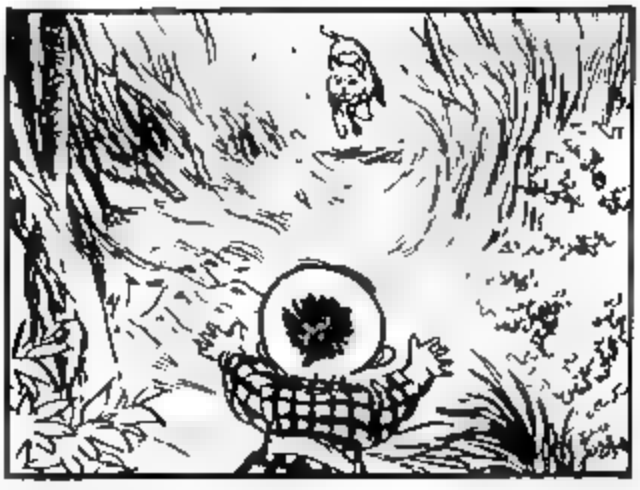

YOU!
YOU!!
YOU
DAMN
DOG!!
T-
TONO!!
TONO
!!

TWANNG
TUK
TUK


PHWEE
FWEET
PHWEEEET







FWSSST

W-WUFF
HAH?! WH- WHO ARE YOU ?!

ASSASSIN. LONE WOLF AND CUB!
I COME FOR YOUR LIFE!
SHAKK

ARGH!
SHRICK
OH, NO!!
T-TOMO!
BASTARD!
DAMN YOU!

DOM DOM
BOOHHH
SHANGG
KSHANG

BOOHH

KILL THE DEMONS!!
OPEN THE WAREHOUSES!
TEAR THEM DOWN!
HYAAAAHHHH?!!

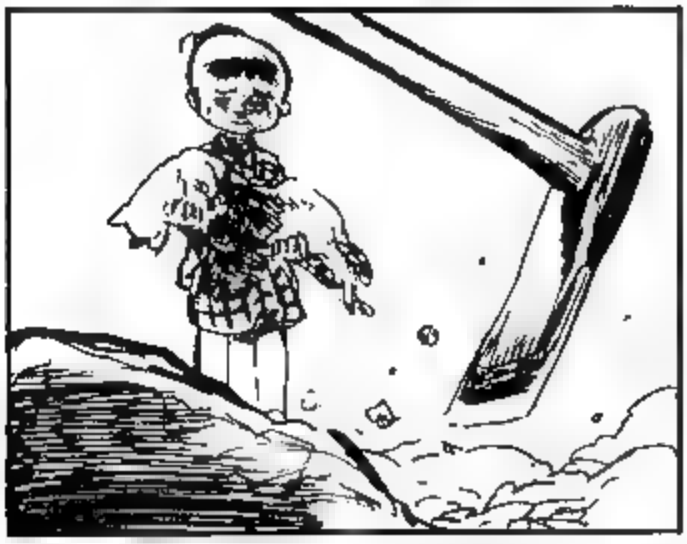
AAH!!
IKKI! IT'S AN IKKI!!!

HYAAAA HHHH?!!

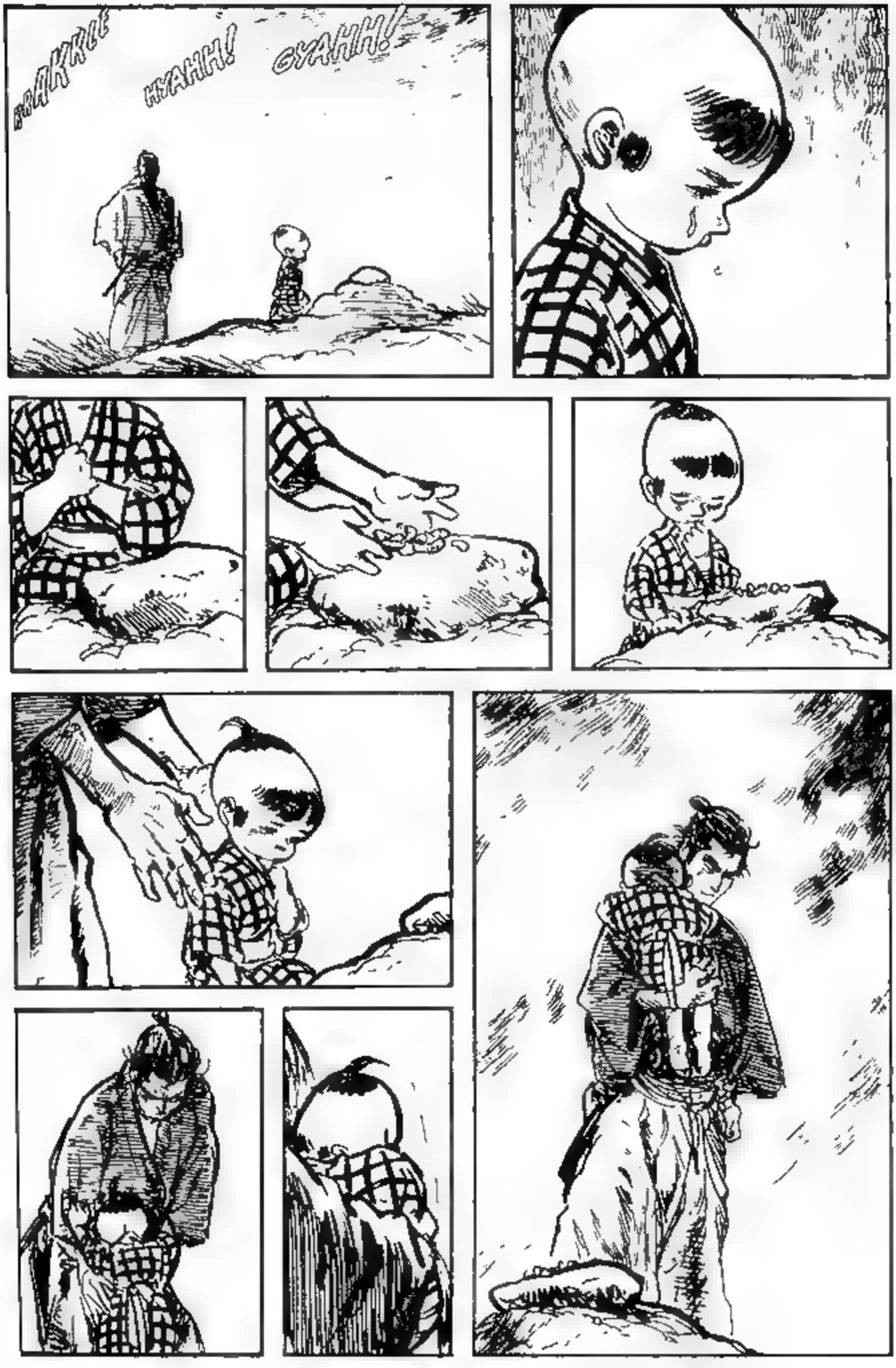
CURS!
PEASANT SCUM!

¡AHH!
HYAHHH!
THE BAD DIAMOND'S DEAD TO ITS OWN!
HYAHHH!
YAHHH!
HYAH!
YAHH!

HYAAHH!
HYAAHH!
YAHHH!



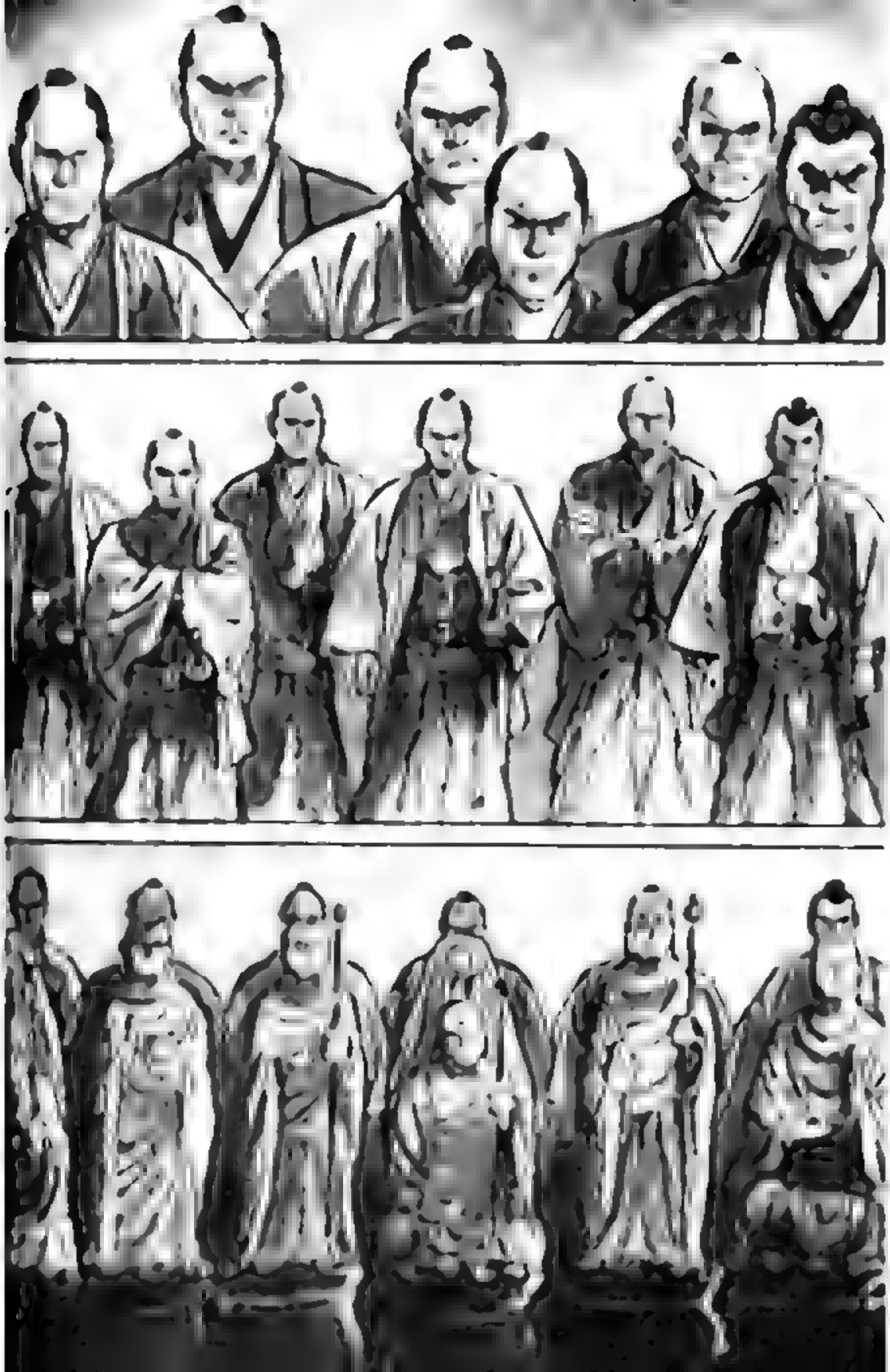
AIEE!!
AUGHH!
FWHOOSH


BRAKKK!
KYAHH!
GYAHH!

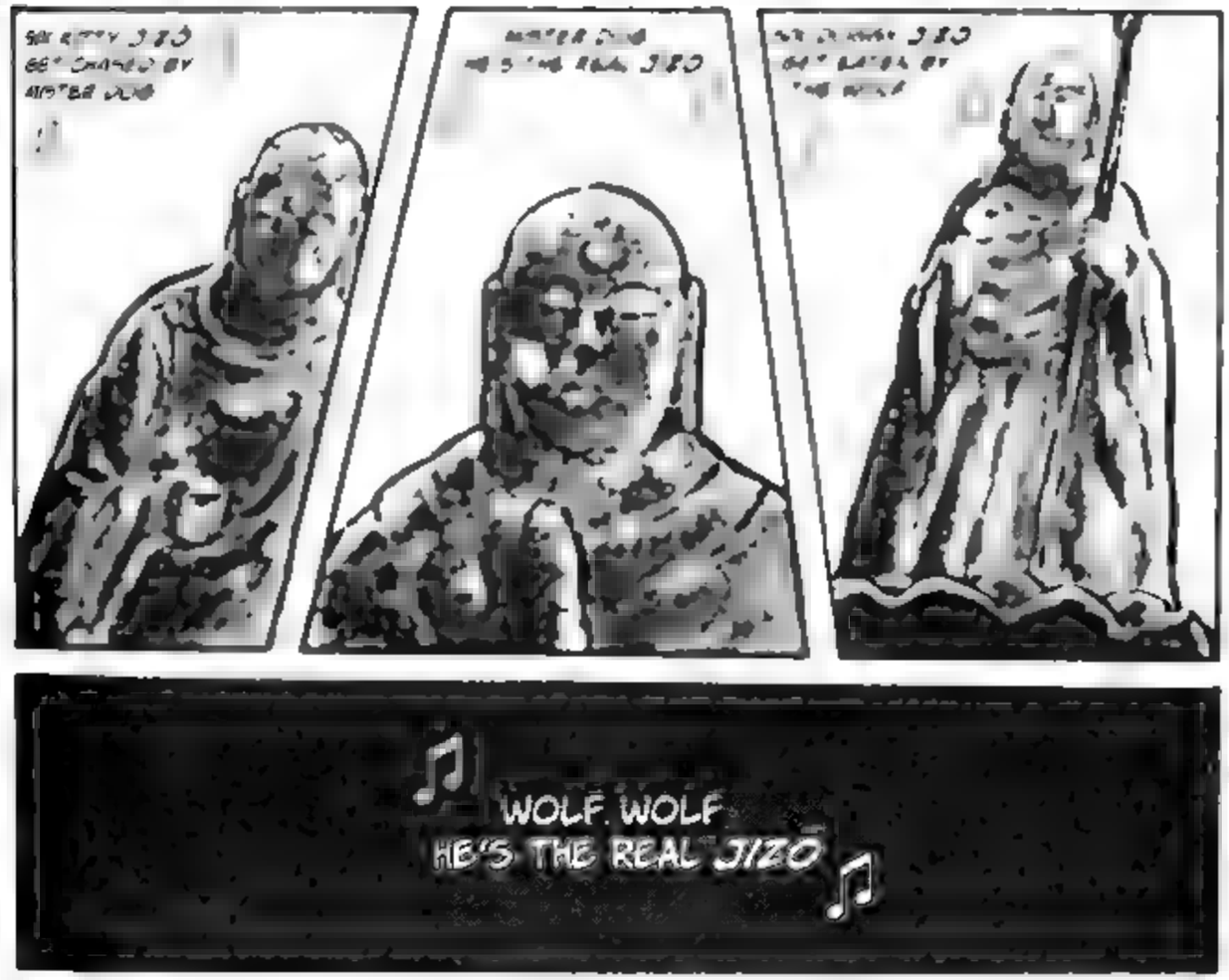
HUNGER TOWN...

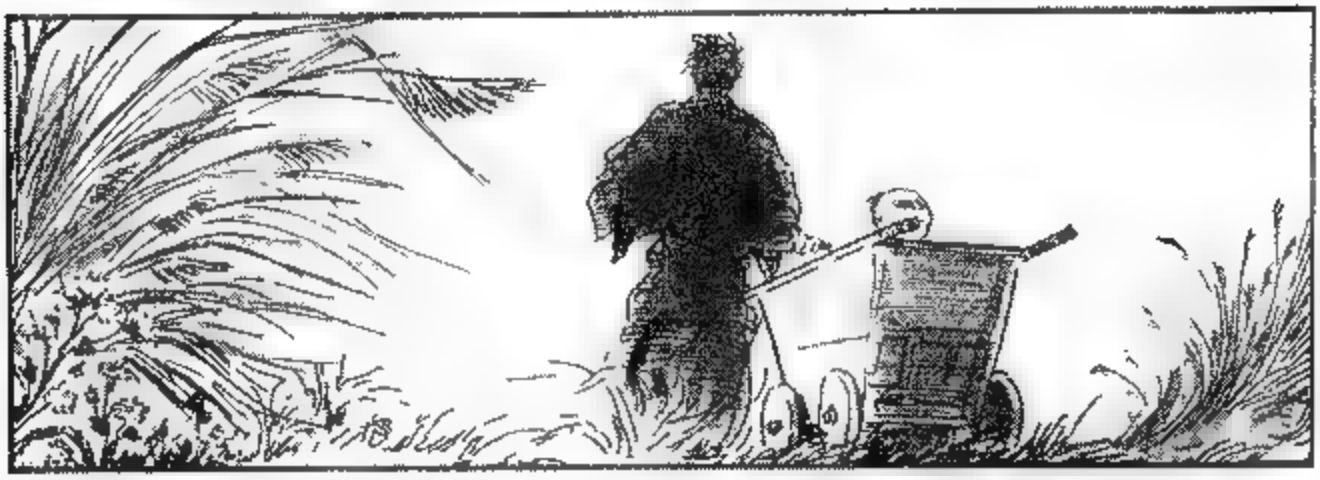
the thirty-second

The Soldier is the Castle

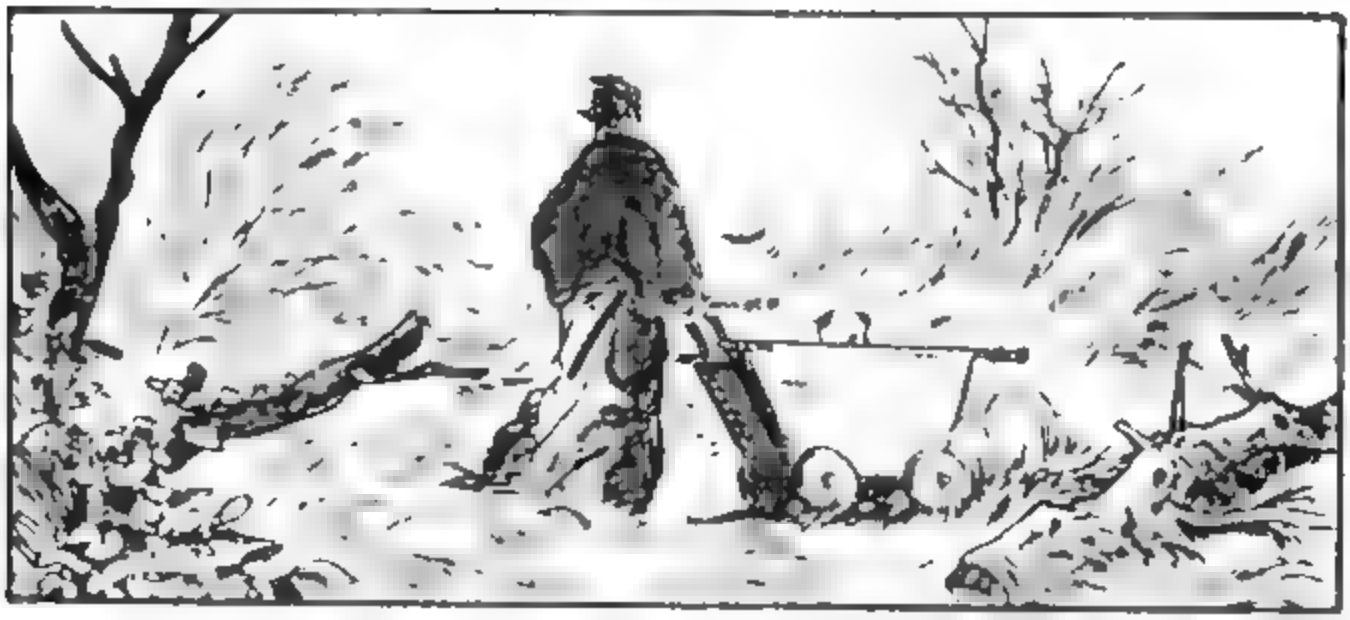


MISTER CAT
HE'S THE REAL JIZŌ
SIX RATTY JIZŌ
GET CAUGHT BY MISTER CAT
MISTER CAT
HE'S THE REAL JIZŌ


WOLF. WOLF
HE'S THE REAL JIZŌ



WOLF'S THE REAL JIZŌ



WHAT MEANS THE *MANJI?*
. . . .
. . . .
PROTECTION AGAINST EVIL! THE SOURCE OF INFINITE VIRTUE!

LISTEN WELL.
MANJI IS THE SIGN OF ALL ENLIGHTENED BODHISATTVA, RADIATING THE HEAVENLY LIGHT OF DHARMA TRUTH FROM THE BREAST OF THE VIRTUOUS AND MAJESTIC KONGŌ MANJI. MANJI, ALSO KAIMAEN DESTROYER OF EVIL
WITH THE HUNDRED THOUSAND LIGHTS, THE BODHISATTVA ASANGRA ILLUMINATES THE WORLD OF THOSE WHO FOLLOW THE BUDDHA
LIKEWISE, UPON THE BREAST OF THE VIRTUOUS AND MAJESTIC DHARMA-KAYA BODHISATTVA, MANJI EXTINGUISHES THE HEAVENLY LIGHT, REVEALING IN AN INSTANT THE HUNDRED THOUSAND WISDOMS AND VIRTUES TO ALL BODHISATTVA
ASSASSIN OF THE WAY OF DEMONS
AT ONE WITH RIKUDŌ SHISHŌ, THE SIX PATHS AND THE FOUR LIVES! SURELY YOU KNOW THE JIZŌ BODHISATTVA OF THE SIX PATHS. SPEAK!
FIRST, YO-TENKA JIZŌ BODHISATTVA OF TENDŌ, THE WAY OF HEAVEN!

BEARING IN HIS LEFT HAND THE NYOI HOSO JEWEL OF DHARMA TRUTH, AND MAKING WITH HIS RIGHT THE SEPPO MUDRA OF THE DHARMA!
SECOND THE BODHISATTVA OF JINDO, THE WAY OF MAN. HOKOO JIZO!
IN HIS LEFT, A SHAKUJO PILGRIM'S STAFF WITH HIS RIGHT THE MUDRA OF YOGAN PRAYERS GRANTED!
THIRD THE BODHISATTVA OF SHURADO WAY OF SLAUGHTER KONGOODO JIZO THE FLAG OF KONGO DIAMOND TRUTH IN HIS LEFT WITH HIS RIGHT THE SEMUI MUDRA VIRTUE TO THE MASSES!
FOURTH THE BODHISATTVA OF CHIKUSHODO, WAY OF THE BEAST, KONGOM JIZO!
IN HIS LEFT, THE SHAKUJO STAFF, WITH HIS RIGHT, THE MUDRA OF MUSAI
FIFTH, THE BODHISATTVA OF KIGADO, WAY OF STARVATION, KONGOHO JIZO. IN HIS LEFT, THE HOKSAKU JEWEL, WITH HIS RIGHT, THE MUDRA OF MANNA, KANRO!

LAST, THE BODHISATTVA OF JIGOKUDŌ, THE WAY OF HELL, KONGŌGAN JIZŌ. THE KAENMADŌ IN HIS LEFT, WHILE WITH RIGHT HAND UPON RIGHT ANKLE, HE SIGNS THE MUDRA OF JŌBEN, HOPE FULFILLED!
IN SHORT!
THE WAY OF HEAVEN, THE WAY OF MAN, THE WAY OF SLAUGHTER, THE WAY OF THE BEAST, THE WAY OF STARVATION, THE WAY OF HELL! THE BODHISATTVA MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SIX WAYS!
THE BODHISATTVA OF THOSE WHO LIVE IN MEIFUMADŌ IN PURSUIT OF THEIR QUEST!
TRULY, AN ASSASSIN OF RIKUDŌ SHISHŌ
YET WE HAVEN'T SEEN YOU PERFORM

SSSH

SKREEH

AN ELABORATE SETUP

IS IT NOT NATURAL TO TEST AN ASSASSIN'S SWORD ARM? ESPECIALLY AN *EXPENSIVE* ONE?

AN ASSASSIN OF *RIKUDŌ SHISHŌ* MUST BE USED TO IT

THEY WIELD *RŌGABŌ-WOLF-FANG* HALBERDS, AN INFANTRY WEAPON FROM THE ERA OF WARRING STATES...AND FOR ARMOR HOODED CHAIN MAIL!

WOLF FANGS VERSUS LONE WOLF AND CUB. AN INTERESTING MATCH, DON'T YOU THINK?

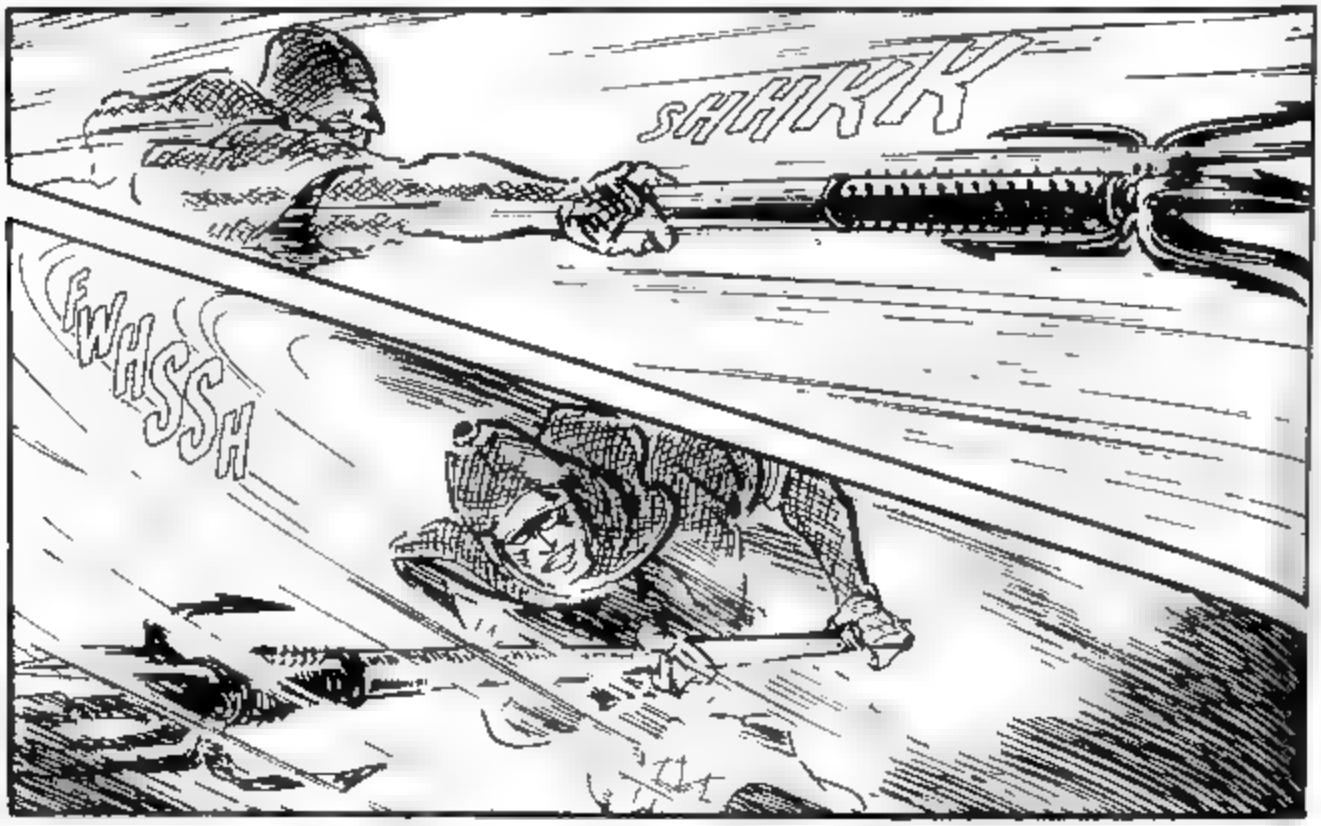
IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO FIGHT, YOU MAY GO BACK FROM WHENCE YOU CAME.

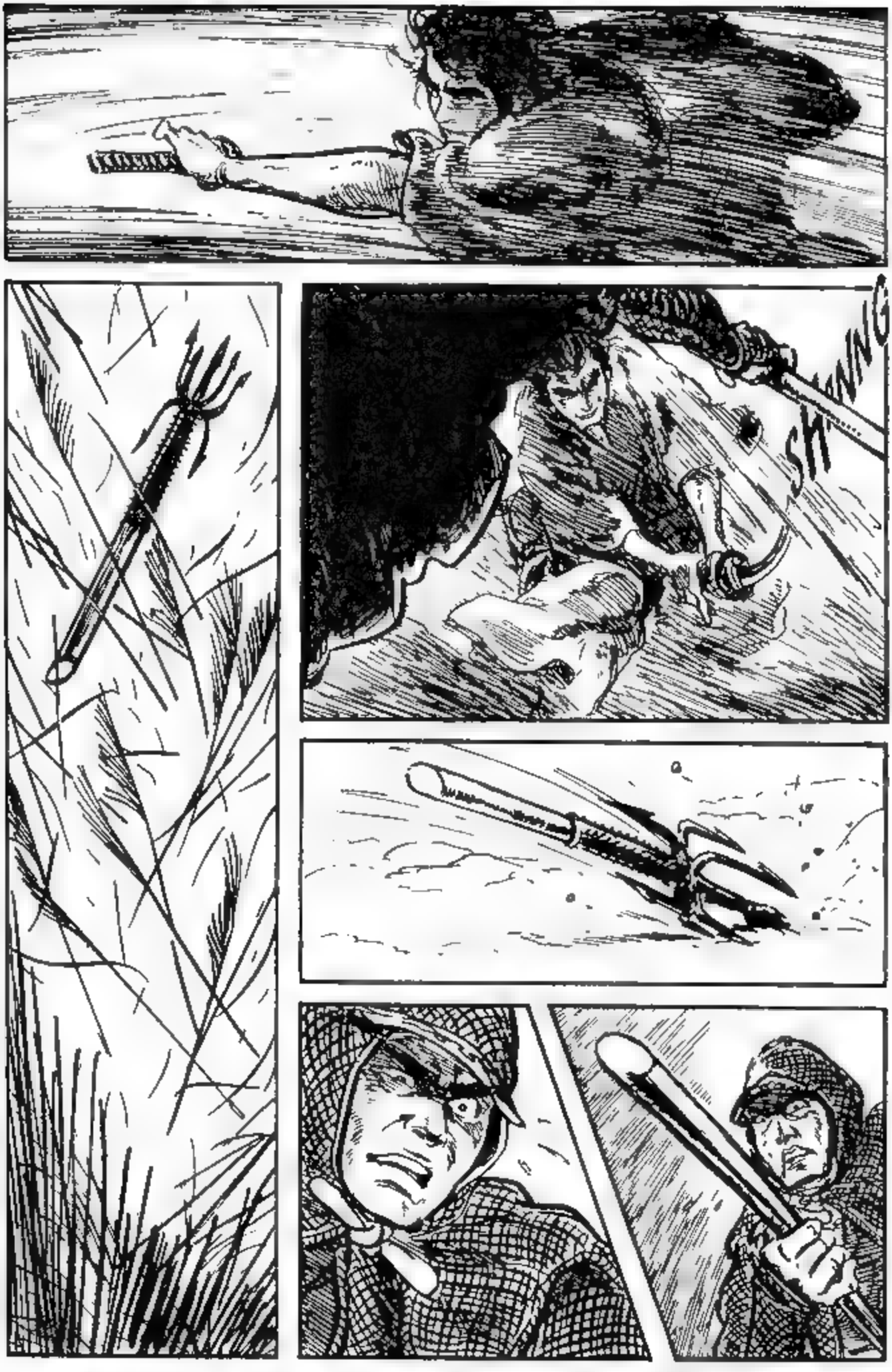
IT IS A RARE WARRIOR WHO CAN DEFEAT CHAIN MAIL AND *RŌGABŌ*.

THE ASSASSIN KNOWS NO RETREAT!

HE ONLY *ATTACKS!*

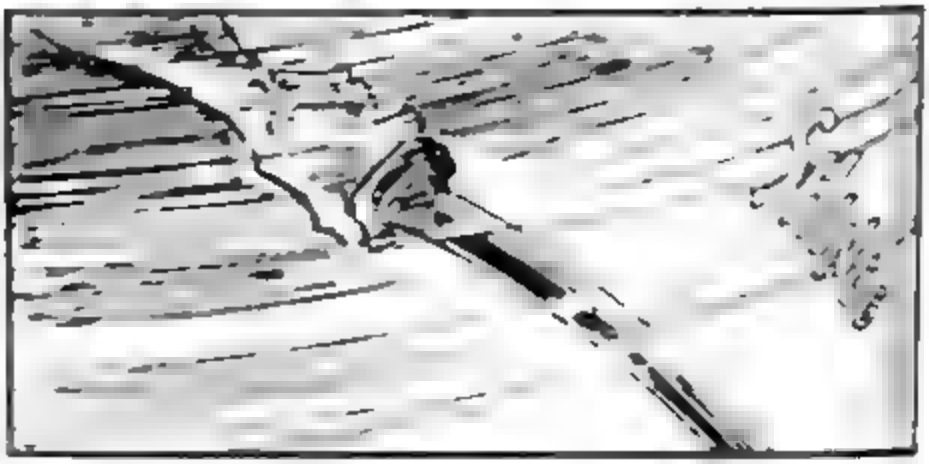
WELL SAID! WE TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR CHILD. NOW, I AM EAGER TO OBSERVE YOUR TECHNIQUE!


SHHKK
FWHSSH



HYAHHH

WHSHH



UNNAH

HOH!
THROUGH RŌGABŌ KAFT AND CHAIN MAIL, WITH ONE STROKE!
A DŌTANUKI BATTLEFIELD SWORD CAN CLEAVE THE BREAST-PLATE OF A FULL SUIT OF ARMOR...
AND I AM THE FORMER KŌGI KAISHAKU-NIN, A MASTER OF SUEMONO-GIRI.
A DŌTANUKI!!

AND SUCH INCREDIBLE SKILL! YOUR REPUTATION IS DESERVED!
I'M OVERWHELMED!
FORGIVE OUR IMPROPRIETY
TELL ME THE STORY.
JIZŌ GENBA, JŌDAI CASTLE WARDEN OF IWAKIDAIRA HAN.
JIZŌ GYŌBU, METSUKE INSPECTOR.
COMMANDER OF THE GUARDS, JIZŌ KIKEN
HOME COMMISSIONER, JIZŌ HEIDAI
JIZŌ YAJIRŌ. INSPECTOR OF THE GUARDS.
FORGIVE MY EARLIER AFFRONT
JIZŌ KOSHIRŌ. HAN STOREHOUSE MANAGER

MEN SPEAK OF THE SIX JIZŌ OF IWAKIDAIRA HAN
ARE YOU OF THE SIX HONORED HOUSEHOLDS?
INDEED. THE BLOOD OF THE JIZŌ CLAN RUNS THROUGH US ALL
IT WAS NECESSARY TO TEST YOU. FOR IWAKIDAIRA'S VERY SURVIVAL HANGS IN THE BALANCE. FORGIVE US!
HERE— ONE THOUSAND RYŌ, IF YOU WOULD CONFIRM.
CONTINUE.
PERHAPS YOU'VE HEARD OF THE GOLD DUST IN THE SANDS OF THE SUGA RIVER? AND OF THE SHŌGUNATE'S MINING OPERATIONS IN MUTSU?
I HAVE.

THE GOLD IS ALWAYS TRANSPORTED TO UTSUNOMIYA VIA THE ŌSHŪ BYWAY
.AND FROM THERE TO THE SHŌGUN'S GOLD VAULTS IN EDO VIA THE NIKKŌ BYWAY
HOWEVER
.. THIS YEAR WE'VE BEEN TOLD THE GOLD CARAVAN GOES FIRST TO TANAKURA
.AND THENCE TO EDO BY THE *MITO* BYWAY, THEREBY CROSSING THROUGH OUR *HAN!*
IF STORMS OR DISASTER HAD CLOSED THE ŌSHŪ BYWAY, WE WOULD UNDERSTAND
BUT INSTEAD
I'VE RECENTLY RIDDEN ITS FULL LENGTH. THERE'S NO SIGN OF *ANY* PROBLEM!
SO THE QUESTION ARISES—WHY THIS UNNECESSARY *DETOUR?*
ALL SIX OF US HAVE GIVEN DEEP THOUGHT TO EDO'S INTENTIONS.

FURTHER-MORE, TO GUARD THE GOLD CARAVAN...
.THEY'VE DISPATCHED A WAKADOSHIYORI COUNCILOR, KUZEYAMASHIRO-NO-KAMI HIMSELF!
THE ALLEGED REASON FOR THE DETOUR IS THAT HE WISHES TO PAY A COURTESY CALL ON OUR BEDRIDDEN LORD.
BUT IN REALITY, IT CAN ONLY MEAN ONE THING.
THEY'RE PLOTTING TO DESTROY IWAKI-DAIRA HAN.
IT'S ABSURDLY OBVIOUS!
WAKADO-SHIYORI NEVER GUARD A GOLD CARAVAN.
THIS NON-SENSE ABOUT VISITING OUR AILING LORD IS JUST AN EXCUSE TO ENTER OUR TERRITORY
IF THE CARAVAN IS ATTACKED ON IWAKIDAIRA SOIL, THAT IN ITSELF IS EXCUSE ENOUGH TO DISBAND OUR HAN.

THEY'LL BLAME IT ON US. IGNORE OUR DENIALS, AND SEIZE OUR LANDS!
IT'S ALL BEEN CAREFULLY ARRANGED TO GIVE THEM THEIR EXCUSE.
WE EXPECT THE KUROKUWA NINJA TO STAGE THE ATTACK. NO DOUBT THEY'VE CHOREOGRAPHED IT WITH THE GOLD TRAIN.
THE SHŌGUNATE'S FINANCES WORSEN BY THE DAY.
IF THEY ABOLISH OUR HAN, AND PLACE IT UNDER SHŌGUNATE CONTROL, THEY ADD OUR THIRTY THOUSAND KOKU TO THEIR COFFERS AND GET A BASE FOR MILITARY ADVENTURES TO THE NORTH. TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE!
. . . .
. . . .
AND SO, TO THE CRUX! BEFORE ENTERING OUR TERRITORY, THE GOLD TRAIN MUST CROSS HERE, AT JIZŌ-GA-HARA!

ONCE THIS GRASSLAND WAS PART OF OUR *HAN* ..

BUT THE SHŌGUNATE EXERCISED ITS RIGHT OF EMINENT DOMAIN, AND ANNEXED IT FOR ITS ALLY, MITO *HAN*!

WHAT BETTER JUSTICE THAN FOR KUZEYAMASHIRO-NO-KAMI, TOOL OF THE SHŌGUNATE, TO PERISH ON THESE FIELDS?!

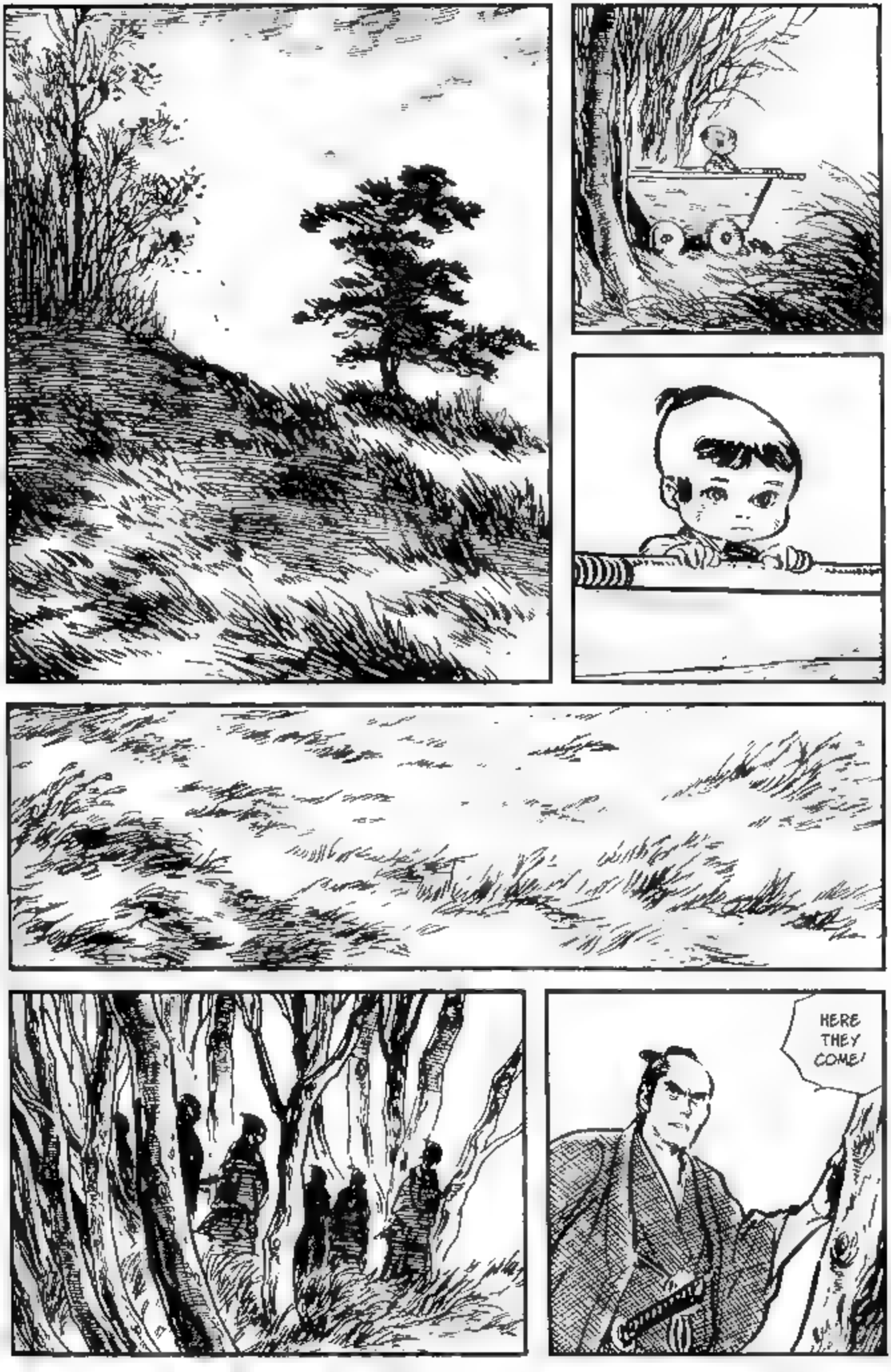
RATHER THAN HUNTING DOWN THE KUROKUMA HIDING IN OUR *HAN*, *WE* STRIKE FIRST!

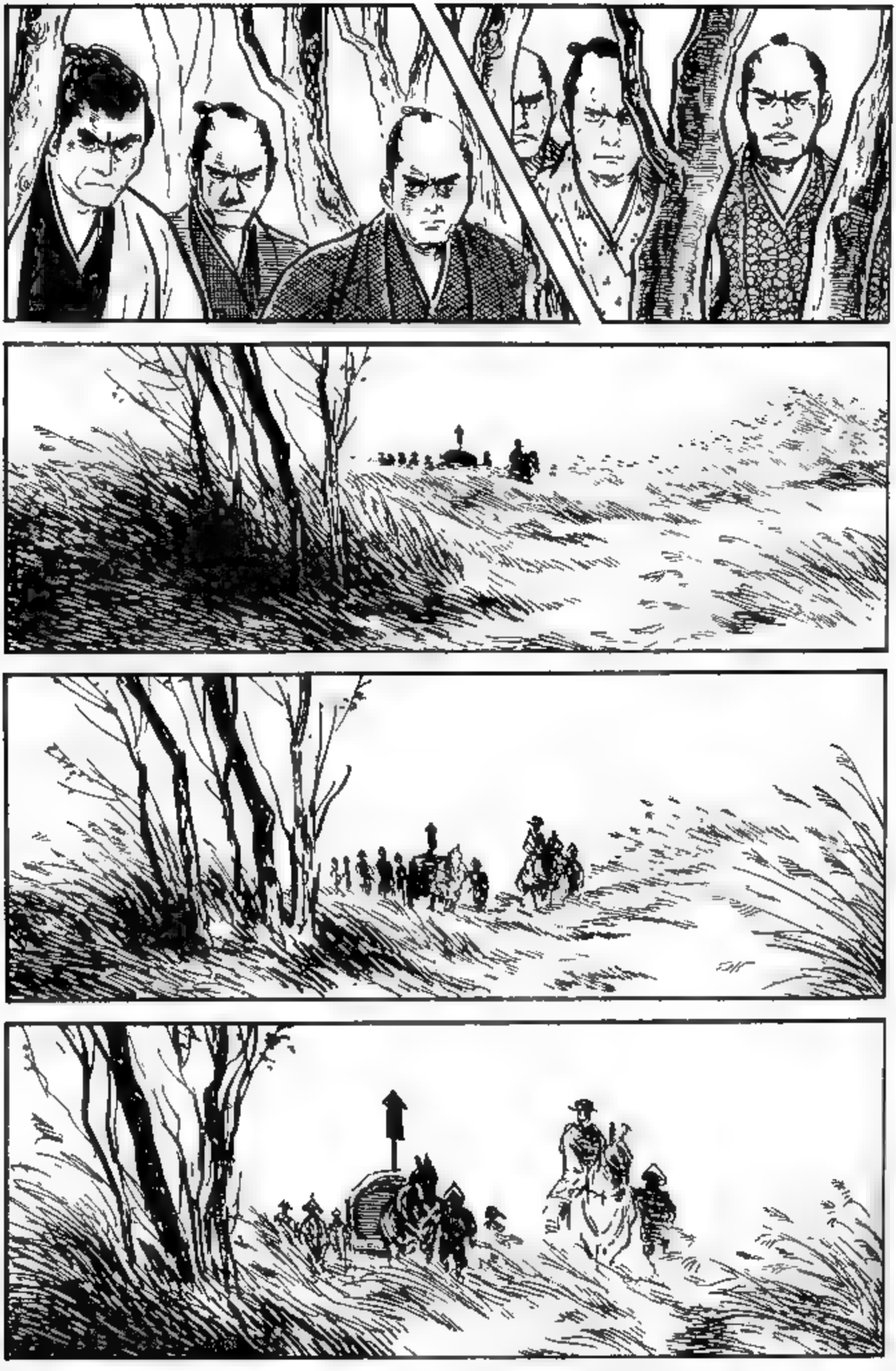
WE KILL KUZEYAMASHIRO-NO-KAMI *HERE*, AND THE FIRE BURNS MITO'S HOUSE, NOT OUR OWN. WE JUST SIT BACK AND ENJOY THE VIEW!

AND IF THE KILLER, AN ASSASSIN, HAS NO CONNECTION WITH US. ALL THE BETTER!
KILL KUZE-YAMASHIRO-NO-KAMI! BUT . IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG, CAN WE TRUST YOU TO KEEP SILENT. ?
DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES.
FOR THE ASSASSIN, FAILURE IS DEATH.
THEN YOU'LL DO IT?! WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL!
ONLY ...
"ONLY" ..? WHAT?
THE SHŌGUNATE WILL NOT GIVE UP.
THEY'LL COME AT YOU AGAIN AND AGAIN!
YOU'RE SAYING WE CAN'T HOLD THEM OFF, AND OUR HAN IS DOOMED? YOU SAY WE STRUGGLE IN VAIN?
I DO.

HAVE YOU HEARD OF KANJŌ?
A SHIELD, . OR ALSO, WARRIORS.
INDEED! THE SHIELD THAT DEFENDS THE CASTLE!
EVEN KNOWING THE CASTLE MUST FALL, THE WARRIOR RAISES HIS SHIELD, AND RIDES TO THE ATTACK! THUS IS THE WAY OF THE LOYAL RETAINER!
. . . .
. . . .
THE GOLD CARAVAN SHOULD REACH THESE FIELDS THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW.
WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU.
UNDER-STOOD!

HYAAH!
FASTER!
IF WE AREN'T ACROSS JIZŌ-GA-HARA BY THE FOURTH HOUR TOMORROW AFTERNOON, WE'LL MISS OUR RENDEZVOUS WITH THE KUROKUWA!
FASTER!
*KŌGI GO-YŌ

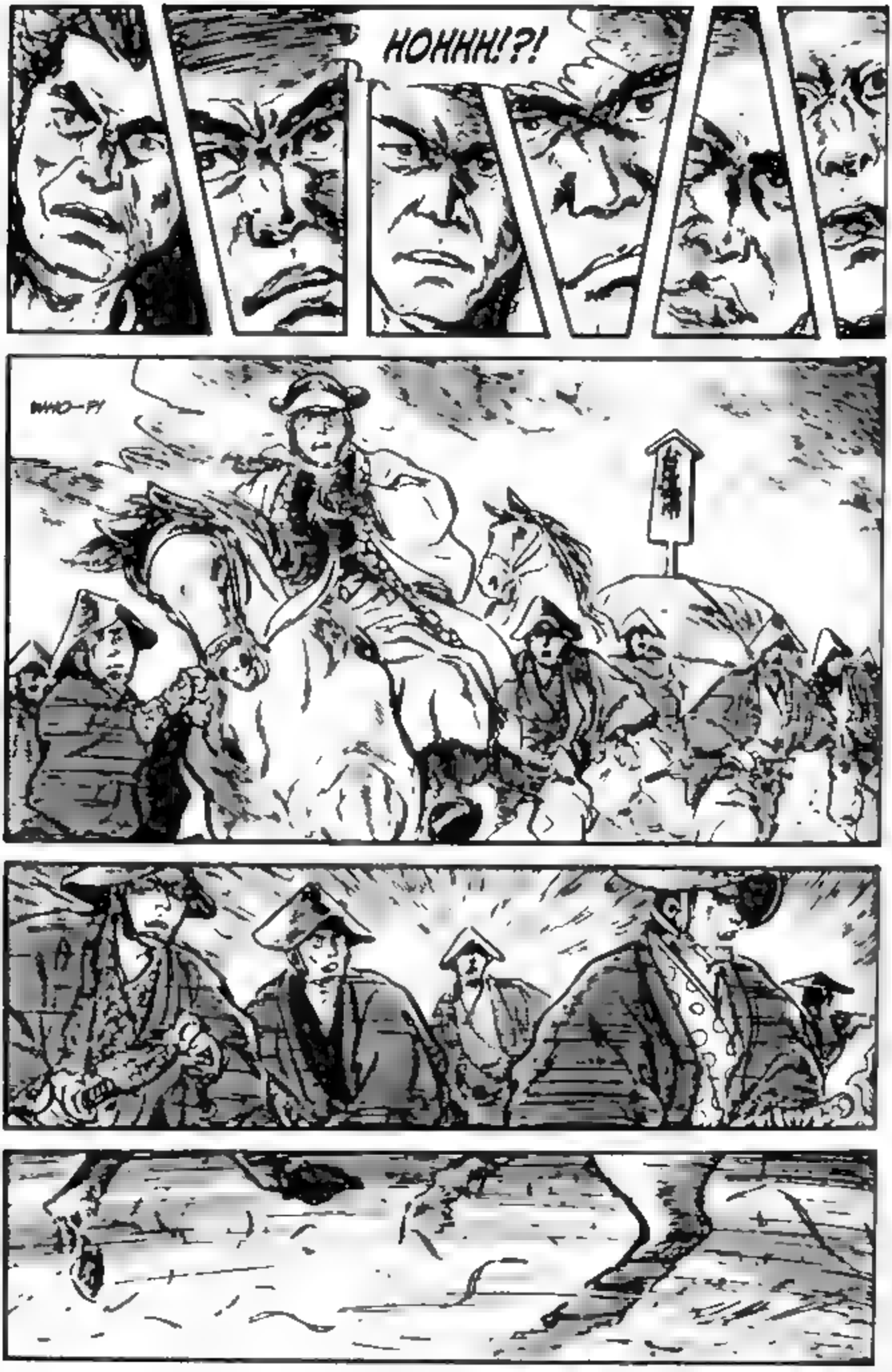

HERE THEY COME!

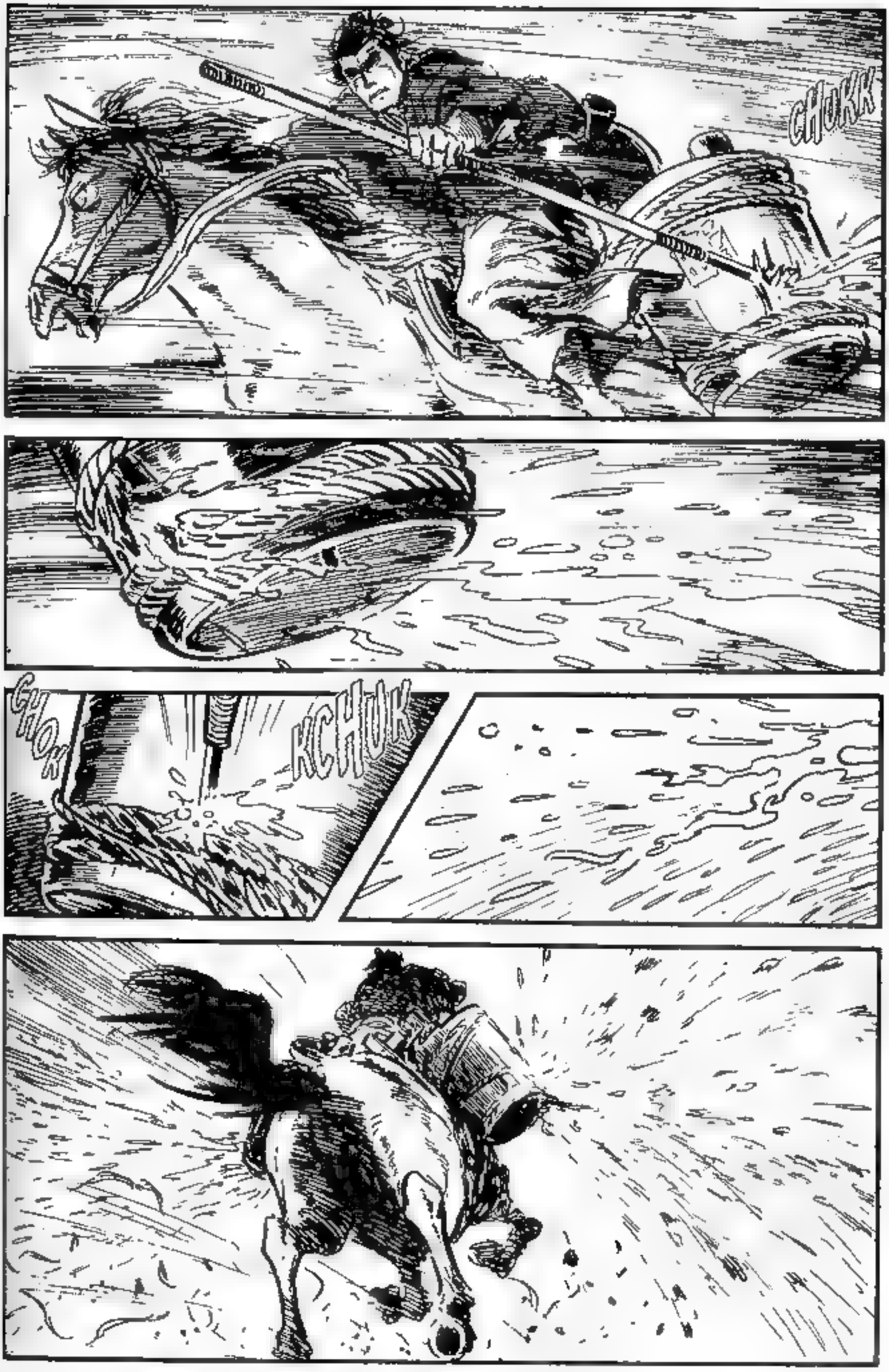


WHERE IS HE?! WHERE'S LONE WOLF AND CUB?!
NOW'S HIS CHANCE TO SURPRISE THEM!
WHAT'S HE UP TO?! HE'LL BE TOO LATE!

WHAT IS HE DOING?!
NOW! IT MUST BE NOW!!
DID HE ABANDON US ?!
KTHOKK
KTHOKK
KTHOK
KTHOK

THOK
THOK
THOK


HOHHH!?!
WHO-?!


CHOKK
GHOK
KCHOK

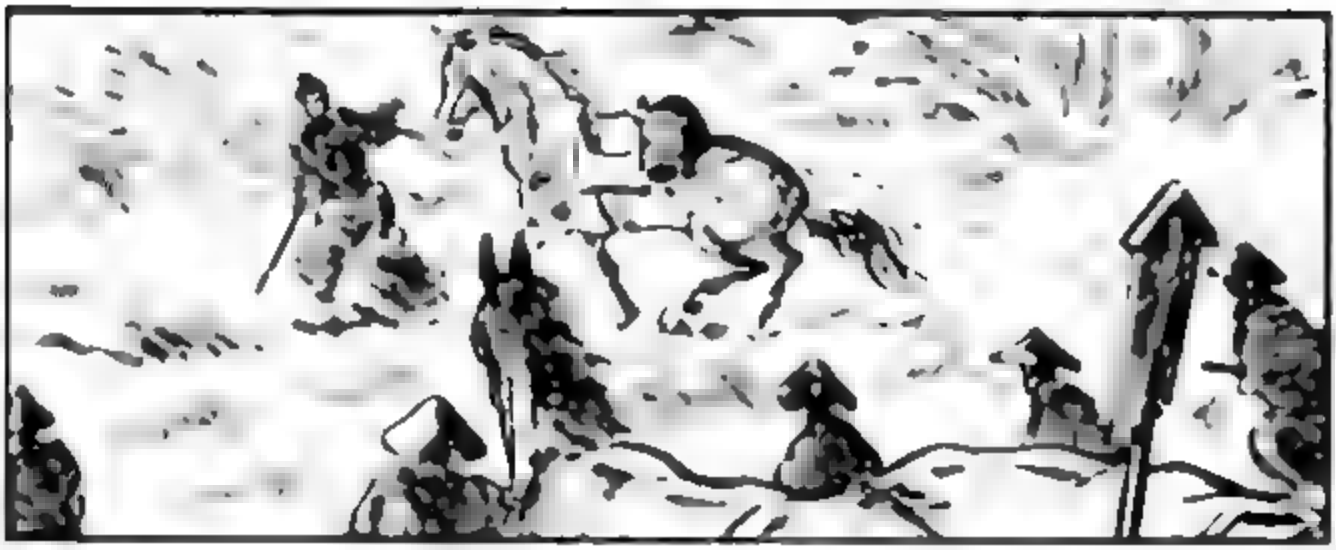
MY GOD! THE KANJŌ SATSUJIN ASSAULT!
"KANJŌ SATSUJIN" ...?!
FROM KŌMEI'S ART OF WAR! TO TAKE THE CASTLE, K.J. THE SOLDIERS! LET NONE ESCAPE!

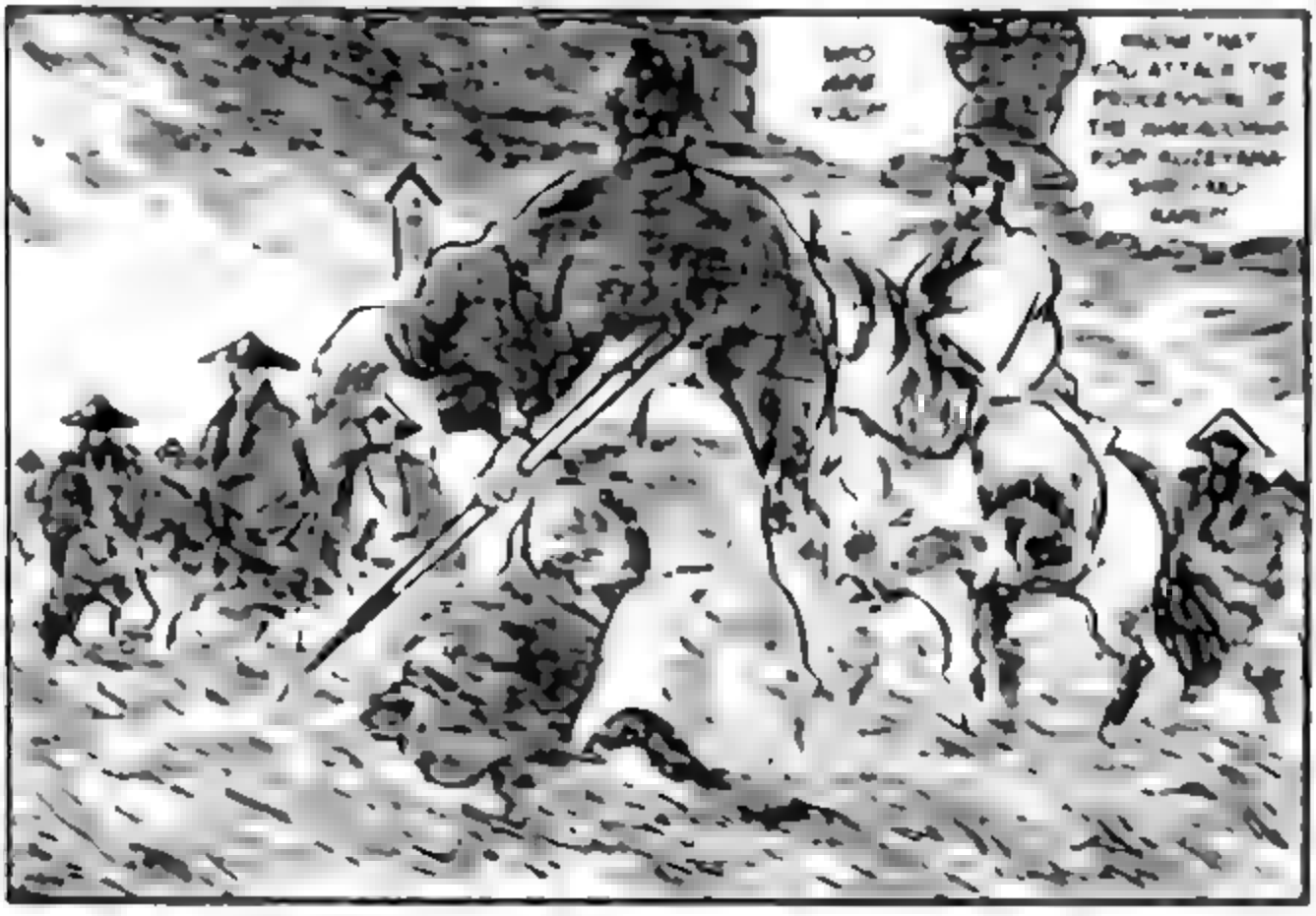
KANJŌ! THE SHIELD AND THE CASTLE!
LURE OUT THE SOLDIERS AND DESTROY THEM, AND THE CASTLE FALLS WITHOUT A FIGHT

LONE WOLF HAS CHOSEN KANJŌ SATSUJIN...

...BECAUSE A SINGLE SURVIVOR CAN STILL TELL ALL TO EDO!
HE'S MAKING SURE NOTHING LINKS US TO THE ATTACK!

ŌGAMI ITTŌ WALKS THE PATH OF *MEIFUMADŌ* IN HIS WAR WITH THE YAGYŪ AND THE SHŌGUNATE! WHO ELSE COULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD ALL WE LEFT UNSAID...?
THAT'S *OIL* HE'S SPREADING! ASSAULT BY *FIRE*— CUT OFF THEIR RETREAT, THEN ENTER THE FLAMES TO KILL THEM ALL!
ANYTHING LESS, AND *KANJŌ SATSUJIN* FAILS!
IT'S THE HEART OF KOMEI'S *BUSHIDŌ!* ONE UNIT DRAWS OUT THE ENEMY, AND FIRE EXTINGUISHES THEM ALL.
A HUNDRED DIE TO SAVE A THOUSAND!
TH-THEAL. HE'S *SACRIFICING* HIMSELF TO SAVE *US?!*





W-WHAT?! LONE WOLF ..?!
FSST
WHOOSH

AAA!
HIYAA!
HIYAA!

CHOKE

NO!
ROWLF!
AUGH!

WHAM
SHAAKK
SSSH
SHOKK
SKUSHH
GGH

AIEE!

AGGHH!

GHAHH!

KiHOKK

ARE. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
QUICKLY! WE MUST TREAT YOUR BURNS!
THEY'RE NOTHING.
YOU DID ALL THIS, FOR US ?
YOU HIRED ME, YOU SPOKE OF KANJŌ!
I ONLY ASKED A QUESTION I DIDN'T MEAN TO SUGGEST..
KANJŌ.. A SUPERB WORD, RICH IN MEANING ..
..AND ALL BUT FORGOTTEN! YET THERE'S NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT TO THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR.

I HAD ANOTHER REASON FOR USING FIRE.
?!
THE *KUROKUWA* WILL BE HERE ANY MINUTE.
THE MEN THEY INFILTRATED INTO IWAKIDAIRA WILL SEE THE FIRE ON JIZŌ-GA-HARA. THEY'LL COME RUNNING, HAVE NO DOUBT
HE'S RIGHT!
THE *KANJŌ SATSUJIN* CONTINUES!
EASILY SAID...YET YOUR FIRE STRATEGY WON'T WORK A SECOND TIME, ESPECIALLY AGAINST THE *KUROKUWA NINJA*, A LEGION OF KILLERS FAR STRONGER THAN THE MEN FROM EDO! YOU CAN'T *POSSIBLY* KILL THEM ALL!

WE WILL FIGHT BESIDE YOU!
YOHH!
SNNK
NO. YOU ARE THE SHIELD! DEFEND THE CASTLE!
BUT
LEAVE ME!

HRAH!
Ó ÓSAKI ITTOH

IS THIS YOUR WORK?!

IT IS

KILL HIM!!

YOUR FEUD WITH THE YAGYŪ WAS NO CONCERN TO THE KUROKUWA. AND THUS WE WATCHED IN SILENCE!

BUT NOW YOU INTERFERE WITH THE SHŌGUNATE! YOU MAKE ENEMIES OF US ALL!

HOW UNFORTUNATE.

BOOM

BKROOM

SPRAK-K

DID DID YOU SEE..?!

A DEMON.

OF MEIFU-MADŌ IT-SELF!

SIX LITTLE JIZŌ
SIT BENEATH THE BRIDGE
ALONG COMES MISTER RAT
AND GNAWS THEIR LITTLE HEADS
MISTER RAT
HE'S THE REAL JIZŌ

SIX RATTY JIZŌ
CAUGHT BY MISTER CAT
MISTER CAT
HE'S THE REAL JIZŌ

SIX KITTY JIZŌ
CHASED BY MISTER DOG
MISTER DOG
HE'S THE REAL JIZŌ
SIX DOGGY JIZŌ
EATEN BY THE WOLF

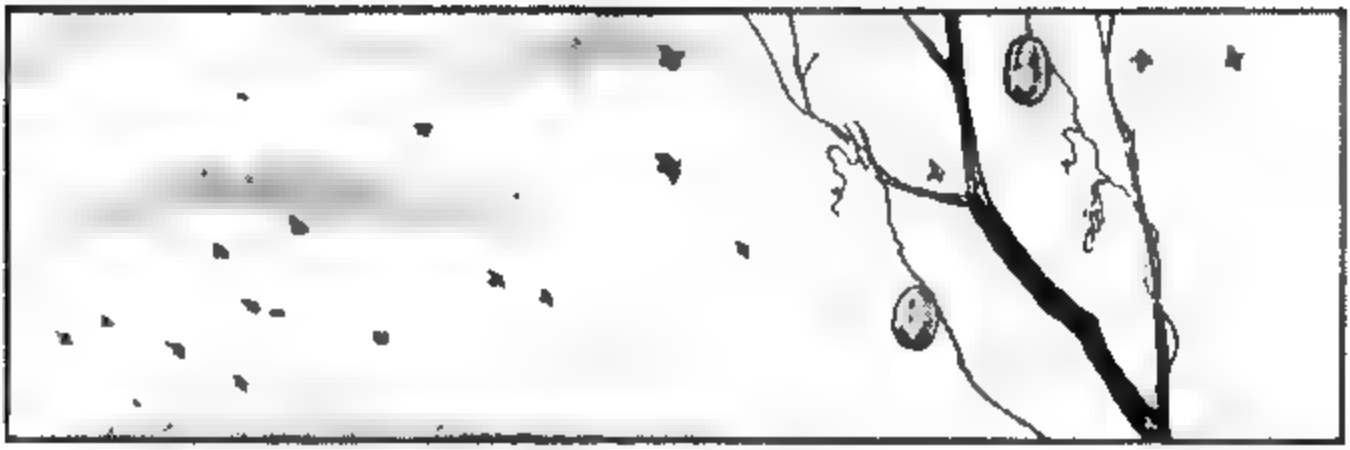
MISTER WOLF
HE'S THE REAL JIZŌ
SIX WOLFISH JIZŌ
BURNED UP IN THE FIRE.
FIRE, FIRE
FIRE'S THE REAL JIZŌ

SIX FIERY JIZŌ
PUT OUT BY THE WATER
WATER, WATER
WATER'S THE REAL JIZŌ
SIX WATERY JIZŌ
DRUNK DOWN BY A MAN
MAN, MAN
MAN'S THE REAL JIZŌ

IF MAN IS THE JIZŌ
THEN WHY DOES HE PRAY
WHY DOES HE PRAY
TO THE JIZŌ...?

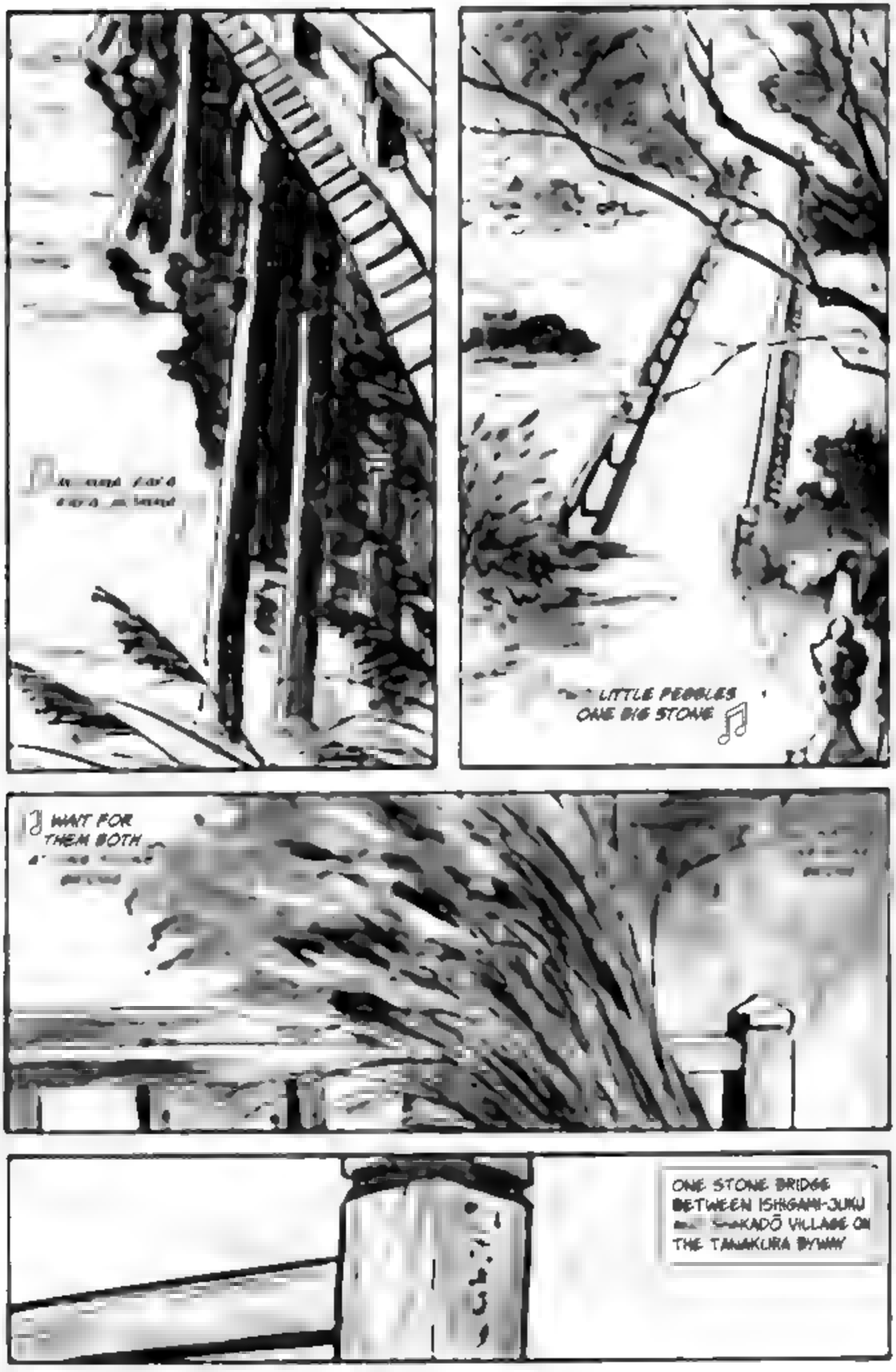
the thirty-third

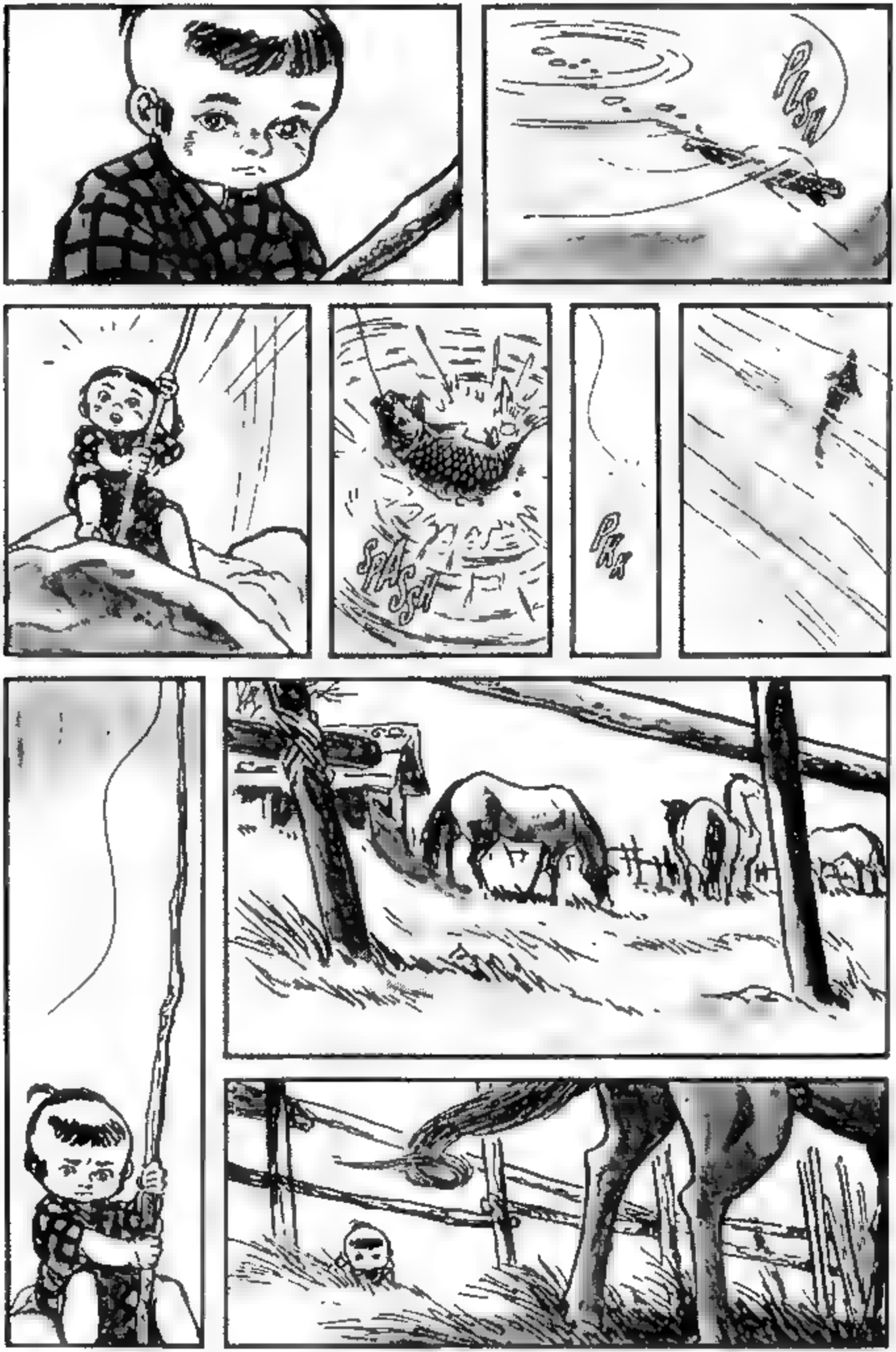
One Stone Bridge



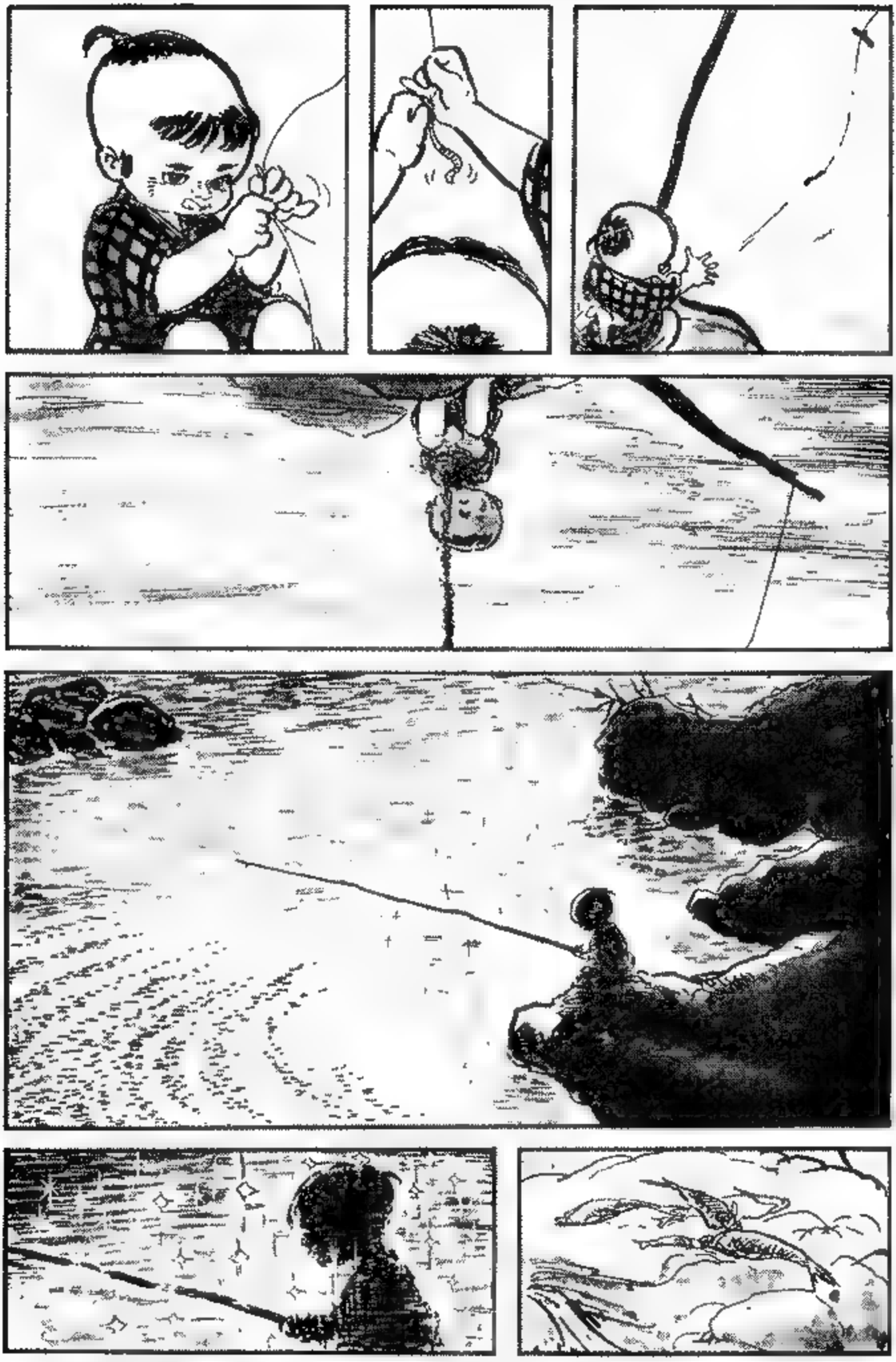
一石橋
IF YOU GET LOST
WHERE SHOULD YOU WAIT?
*IKKOKU BASHI
(ONE STONE BRIDGE)

WHERE SHOULD YOU WAIT
FOR YOUR MOMMA AND PAPA?


LITTLE PEBBLES
ONE BIG STONE
I WAIT FOR
THEM BOTH
ONE STONE BRIDGE
BETWEEN ISHIGAMI-JUKU
AND KAKADŌ VILLAGE ON
THE TAMAKURA BYWAY


Plsh
Splash
Pft

FWHSSH



"IF YOU GET LOST, WHERE SHOULD YOU WAIT? WHERE SHOULD YOU WAIT FOR YOUR MOMMA AND PAPA?"
"MOMMA..PAPA, PAPA...MOMMA, TWO LITTLE PEBBLES, ONE BIG STONE..."
"WAIT FOR THEM BOTH AT ONE STONE BRIDGE!"
"LET'S ALL WAIT AT ONE STONE BRIDGE!"
HA, HA! HMM..FOUR YEARS SINCE I CROSSED THIS BRIDGE.
IT'S TRUE. FOUR LONG YEARS SINCE YOU LEFT FOR EDO...

HEY! THIS IS OUR RIVER!
ONLY WE FISH HERE, SEE?!
LITTLE RUNT!
KRAK
?!

SAY YOU'RE SORRY!
TWAK
FWAK
WHAP
DUMB STRANGER! APOLOGIZE!
THOK
WAK
LITTLE RAT!
WHY YOU--!!
KRAKK
WHOO
THUD
KRAK

OH! THEY'RE HITTING HIM AGAIN
WHY DOESN'T HE FIGHT?! EVEN IT'S BETTER TO FIGHT THEN JUST TAKE IT!
HOW CAN YOU SAY SUCH THINGS?!
HUH!! PATHETIC!

NO MONEY NO FISHY!
UGH!
OWW!
-BRAT
GET IN TRAP

HOW COULD THEY ?!
DARLING! YOU HAVE TO STOP THEM!
HAH! THEY THROW BACK HIS FISH AND SUDDENLY HE COMES OUT FIGHTING...
GOOD BODY IS THAT IT? HE WAS ENDURING IT TO PROTECT HIS FISH?
AND STILL SO YOUNG..
FEW OF HIS AGE COULD HAVE DONE THAT
THE BOY'S SPECIAL
HEE HEE HEE !
YEAH! HAW HAW!
BWA HAW HAW!
LOOKIT 'IM'

UWAAAA!!

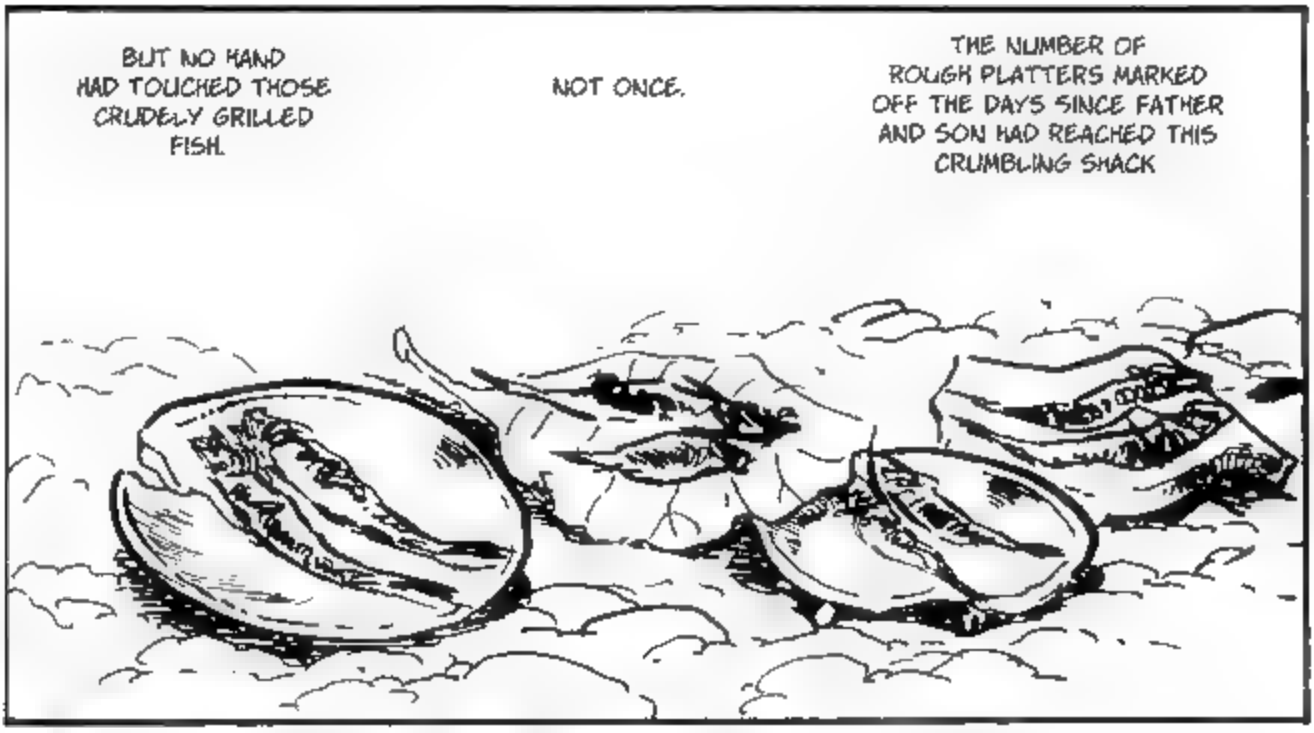
ALIGHA!
H-HELP!!
THAT'S ENOUGH!
FWHIT
LET BOY COME ON.
THIS MY BODY

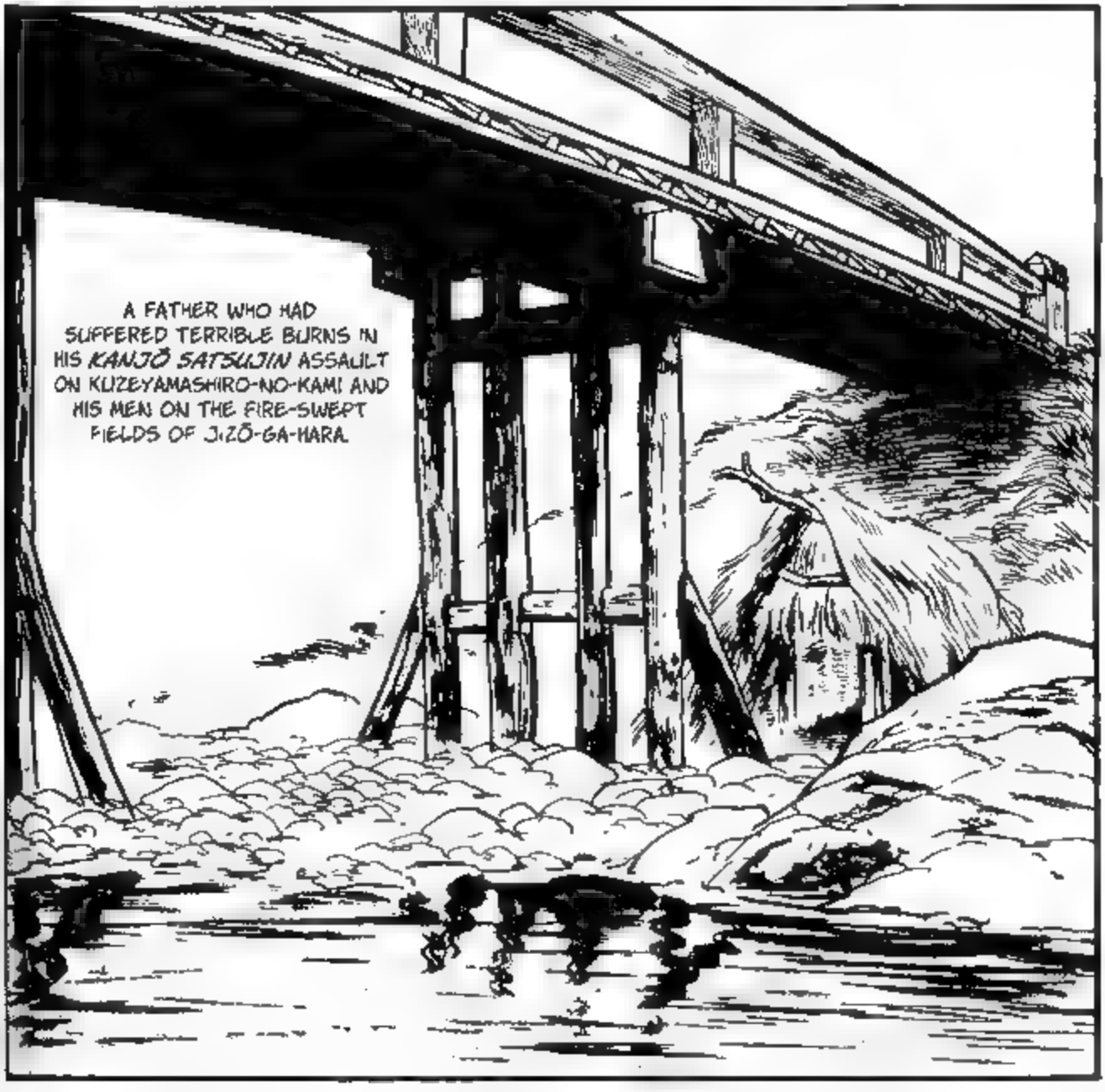
A DŌTANUKI BATTLE-FIELD SWORD!
HOW DID YOU GET ?!
THERE, THERE YOU POOR LITTLE THING.
DON'T BE AFRAID
DOES IT HURT? HOW COULD THEY BE SO MEAN, HMM?
THIS ISN'T A TOY, SON.
YOU BETTER PUT IT BACK WHERE YOU FOUND IT

IS THERE SOMEONE IN THERE ?
A WORD TO YOU, GOOD SIR!
IT'S DANGEROUS TO LET A LITTLE CHILD LAY HANDS ON A SWORD...I BEG YOU TO BE MORE CAREFUL..
?
EXCUSE ME

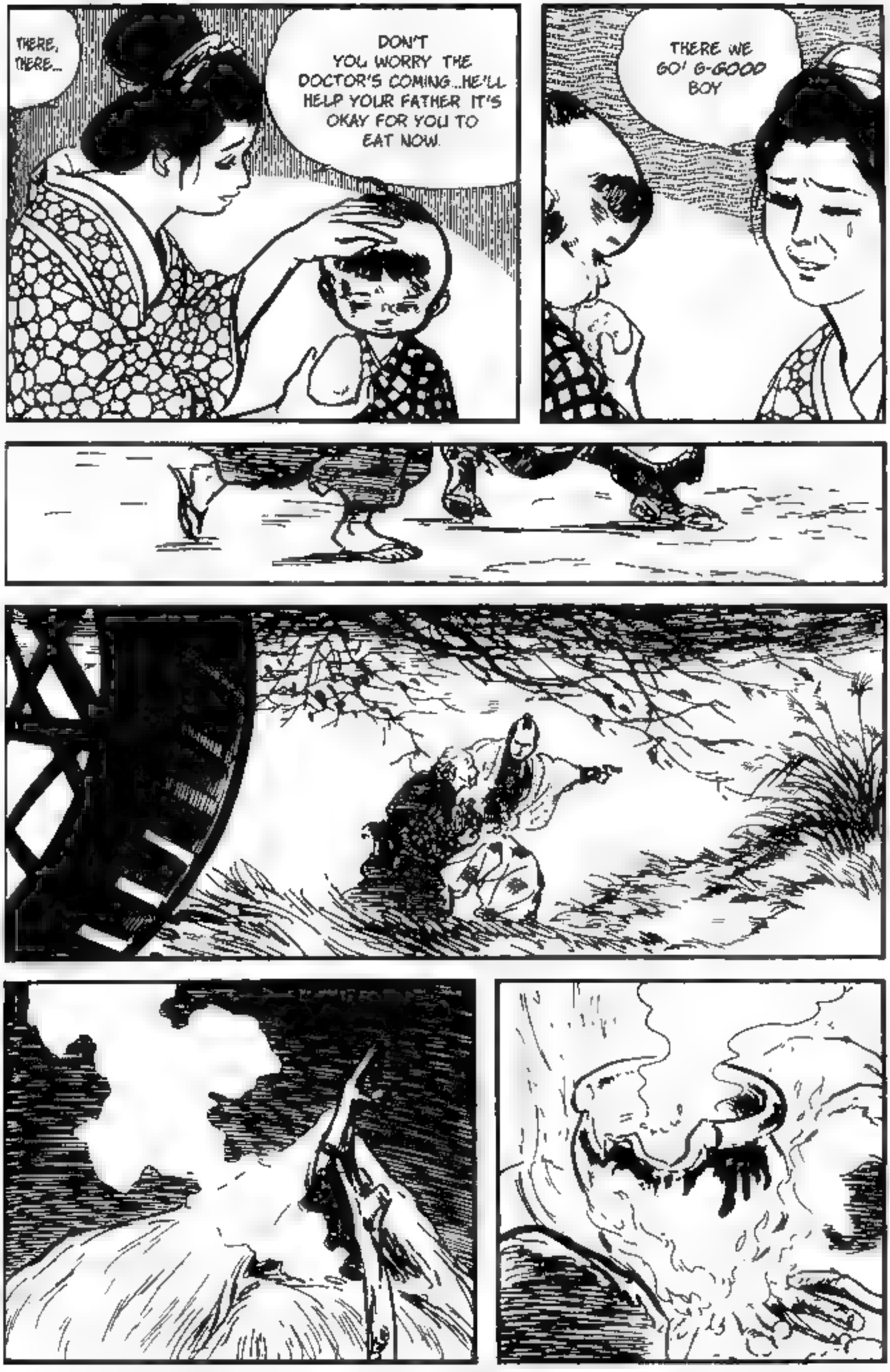
HOH!!
BURNS... SEVERE BURNS!
AND A RAGING FEVER, TOO. INFECTION FROM THE BURNS...?
HE NEEDS IMMEDIATE CARE!
SAYO..?!
YES?

OH?! D-DARLING!
THIS BOY... THIS POOR BOY...
HE WAS TRYING TO FEED HIM!
I SEE IT NOW...
THIS MAN MUST BE HIS FATHER POOR KID IT'S PROBABLY TAKEN ALL HE'S GOT JUST TO CATCH AND COOK THESE FISH...

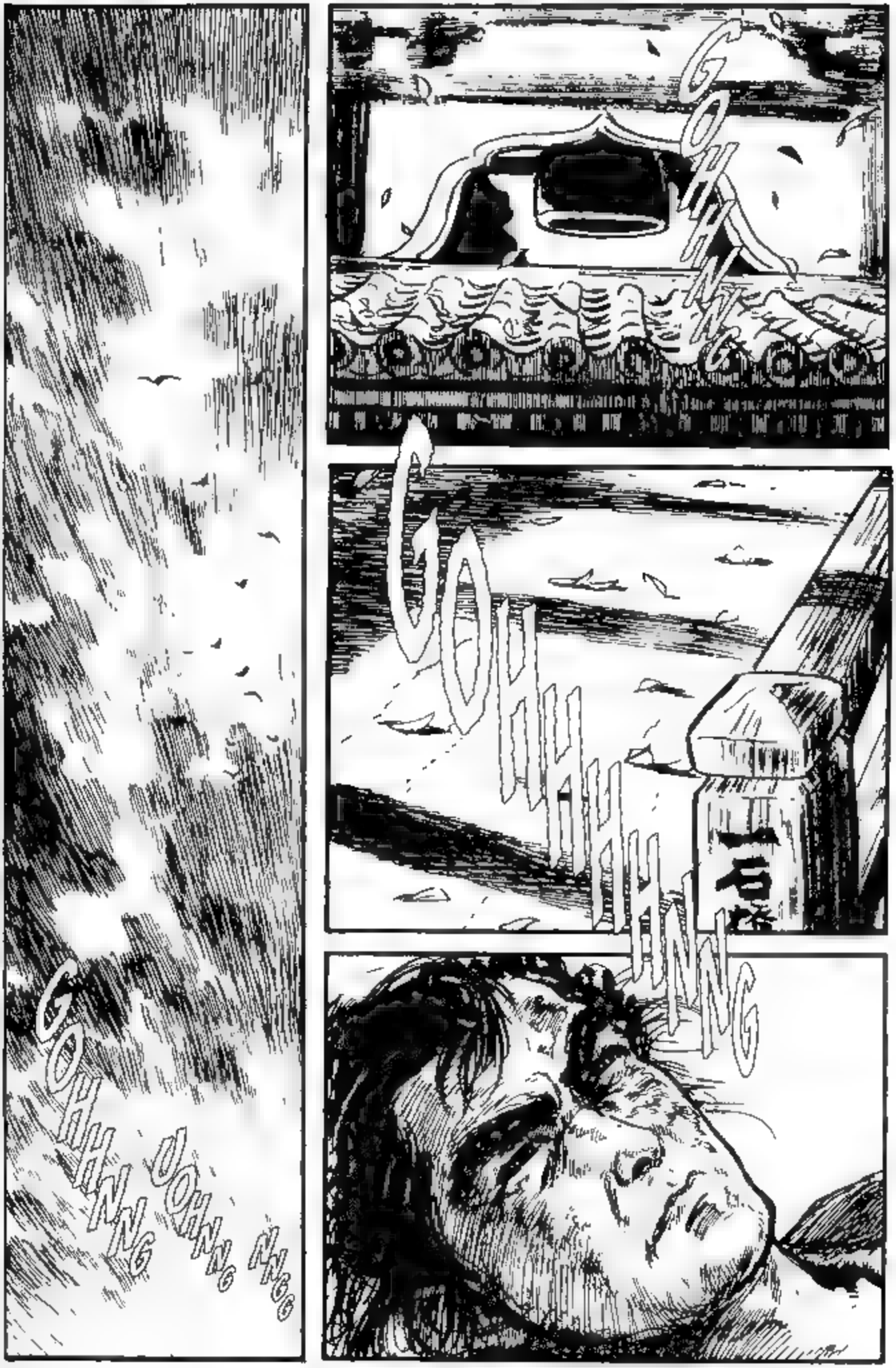

BUT NO HAND HAD TOUCHED THOSE CRUDELY GRILLED FISH.
NOT ONCE.
THE NUMBER OF ROUGH PLATTERS MARKED OFF THE DAYS SINCE FATHER AND SON HAD REACHED THIS CRUMBLING SHACK


A FATHER WHO HAD SUFFERED TERRIBLE BURNS IN HIS *KANJŌ SATSUJIN* ASSAULT ON KUZEYAMASHIRO-NO-KAMI AND HIS MEN ON THE FIRE-SWEPT FIELDS OF JIZŌ-GA-HARA.

A FATHER WHO HAD COLLAPSED AS SOON AS THEY HAD REACHED THIS HUT, A FATHER ABSENT, SILENT, UNMOVING FOR THREE LONG DAYS.
PLEASE EAT. DON'T BE SHY
I'M SURE YOU HAVEN'T EATEN A THING IN DAYS!


THERE, THERE...
DON'T YOU WORRY THE DOCTOR'S COMING...HE'LL HELP YOUR FATHER IT'S OKAY FOR YOU TO EAT NOW.
THERE WE GO! G-GOOD BOY

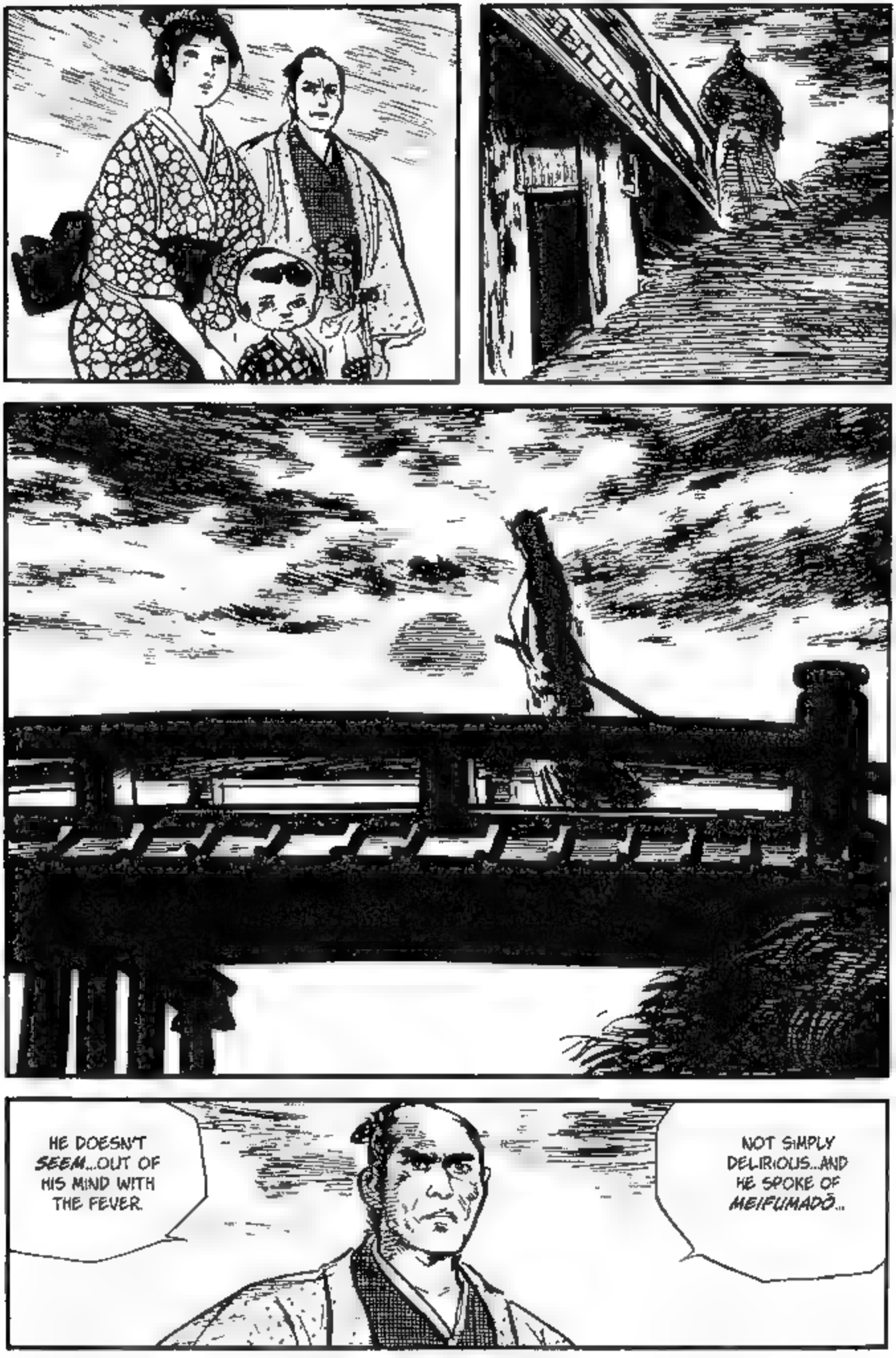
THIRD-DEGREE BURNS
AND SEPTICEMIA, TOO THE FEVER PEAKS TODAY, TOMORROW AT THE LATEST
WE HAVE TO LOWER IT


GOHNNG
GOHNNG
GOHNNG
GOHNNG
GOHNNG
GOHNNG

PAPA!
I I
AM IN YOUR
DEBT

FATHER AND SON, WE LIVE IN *MEIFUMADŌ* THEREFORE, I HAVE NO WORDS OF THANKS.
FORGIVE ME.
CONSCIOUS? AND *STANDING?* WITH A FEVER LIKE *THAT?!* HE..HE'S NOT *HUMAN!*
W-WAIT!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?! YOU'RE TOO ILL TO BE—

THE TOLLING OF THE BELL...
...CALLS ME TO MEIFUMADŌ.
SHIK
DAIGORO...
YOU WAIT HERE.


HE DOESN'T *SEEM*...OUT OF HIS MIND WITH THE FEVER.
NOT SIMPLY DELIRIOUS...AND HE SPOKE OF *MEIFUMADŌ*...

GOHNGGGNNN

GOHHHHNNNNGG

GOHHNNGG

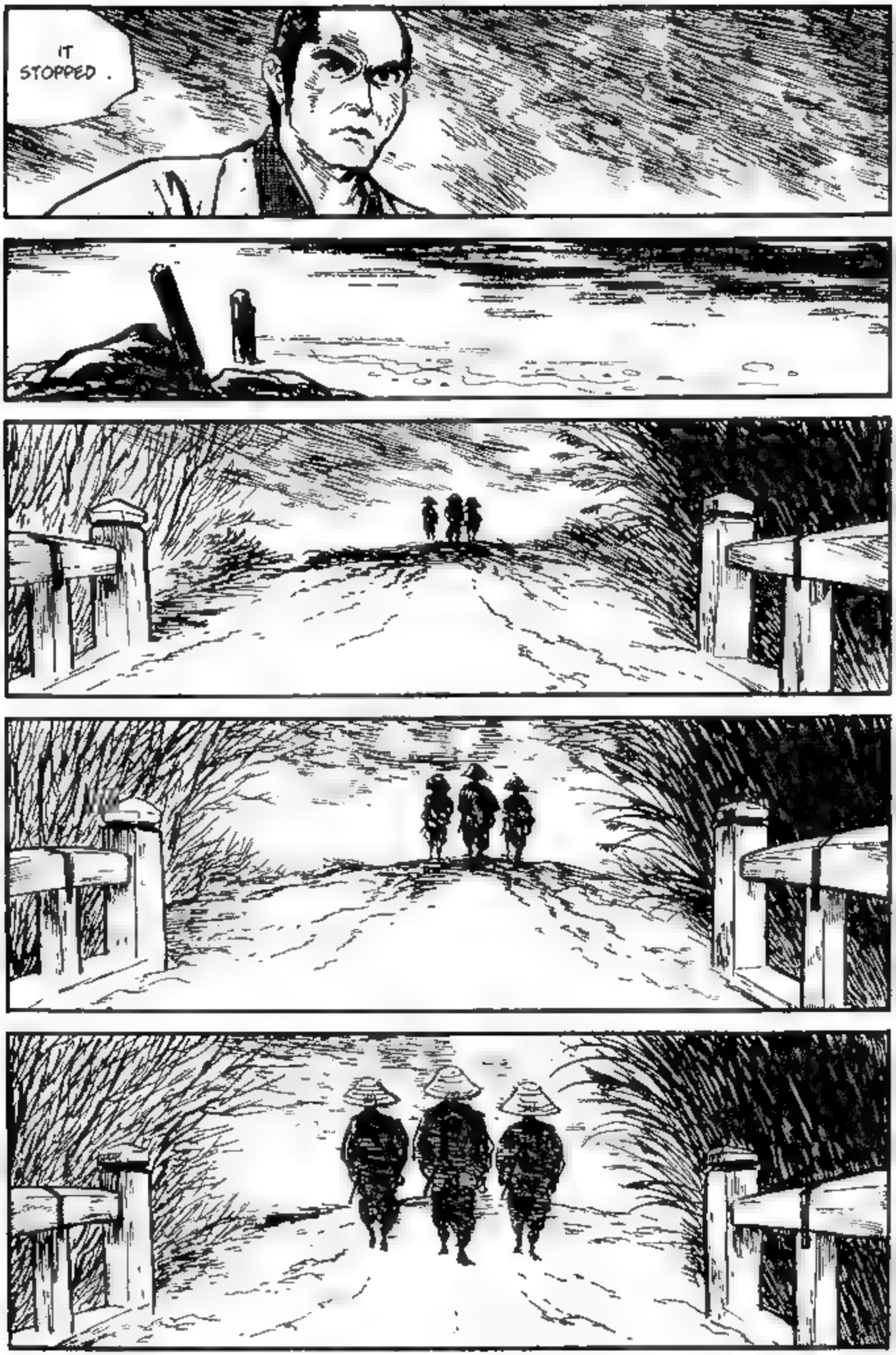
HE SAID THE BALL OF MIFUNAGO CALLS HIM
BUT EVEN SO
WITH THAT FEVER RAVAGED BODY WHEN FEW COULD EVEN STAND.
AND THAT INCREDIBLE PRESENCE!

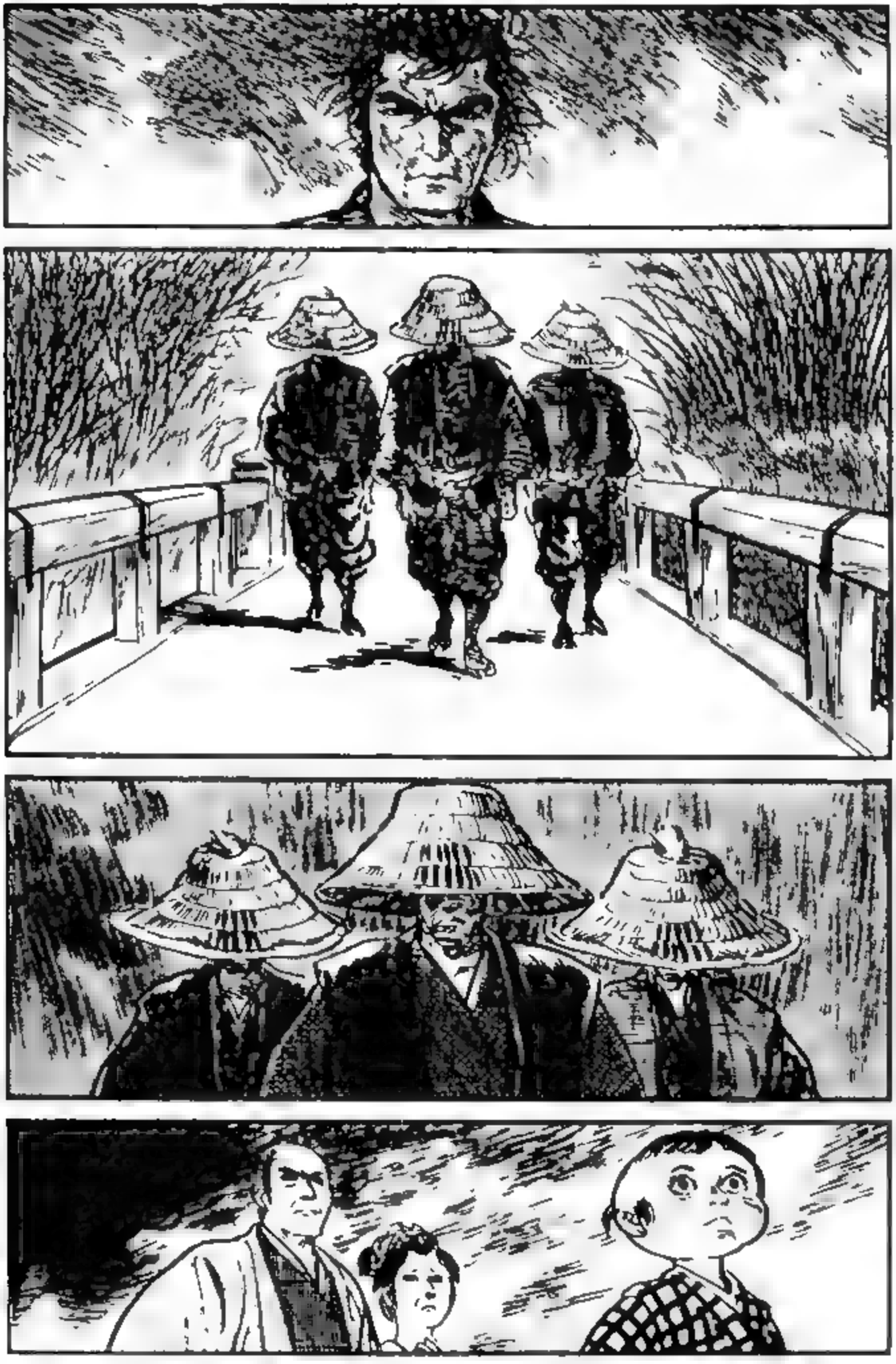
GOHHHNNNGGNNG
NGG
AND... THAT BELL.
WHAT IS IT?! THAT'S NOT THE EVENING BELL!
LISTEN..
GOHHNNN
HIGH. THEN LOW. THERE'S A RHYTHM TO THIS TOLLING.
GOHHNNN
HIGH., THEN LONG. FULL STOP AND NEXT
GNN
GOHHN
LOW. SHORT AND BACK TO HIGH.
GOH

MY GOD! THAT'S A WAR BELL!
JOHAKYŪ! RISING HOLDING, FAST! THREE STROKES. A SIGNAL BELL!
IT HAS TO BE!
GOHHHHNNN
LOW AND LONG
MEANS RIVER...
GOHHHHNNN
SO LOW AND SHORT MAKES BRIDGE
AND THEN HIGH, AND LONG TO WAIT...ON THE BRIDGE..
GOHHHHNNN
AAH?! DON'T TELL ME ?!
GOHHHHNNN
GOHHHHNNN
GOHHHHNNN

THREE STROKES, JO, HA, KYŪ...A SIGNAL BELL
GONNNGGGN
NN
AND THEN THOSE RANDOM STRIKES. A KUROKUWA SIGNAL. CALLING BACK THEIR MEN FROM SPYING ON A CASTLE..

"WAIT, ON A BRIDGE" .IT MUST BE MEANT FOR ME.
THEY'VE GUESSED I'M NEARBY THEY SIGNAL .A PARLEY?


IT STOPPED .



ISHINE OZUNU, OF THE KURO-KUWA?

I'D LIKE TO SAY IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN AFTER ALL THESE *YEARS*...

BUT KUZEYAMA-SHIRO-NO-KAMI'S CARAVAN HAS BEEN *WIPED OUT*

AND MY MEN, TOO. *EXTERMI-NATED!* THIS IS NO TIME FOR *PLEAS-ANTRIES*, ITTŌ-DONO!

. . . .
. . . .

IT *IS* YOUR WORK, ISN'T IT?!

MM.

IN ALL JAPAN, THERE'S ONLY ONE MAN WHO COULD HAVE DONE THIS.

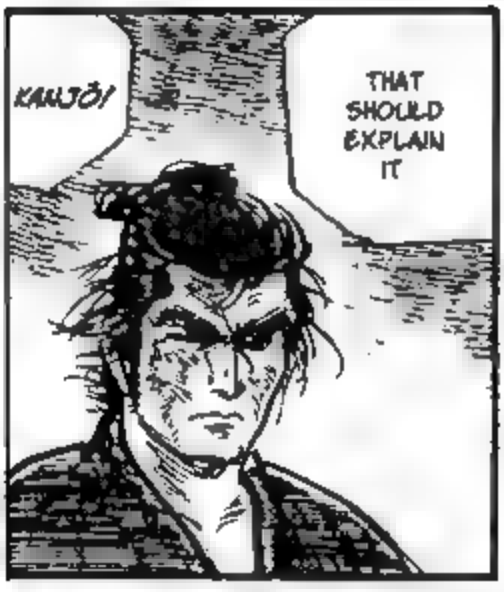
AN ASSASSIN. *LONE WOLF AND CUB!*

AND THUS THE BELL ?

A GUESS.
I SUSPECTED YOU COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR.
YES, IT WAS MY WORK.
AND SO...?
WE KUROKUWA HAVE BEEN *SYMPATHETIC* TO YOUR CAUSE IN YOUR FEUD WITH THE YAGYŪ CLAN.
WE KNOW IT WAS A YAGYŪ *PLOT* THAT MADE YOU A WANTED MAN.
AND THUS, EVEN WHEN THAT ASSASSIN YAGYŪ-*SAMA ORDERED* US TO, WE REFUSED TO TAKE ANY DIRECT ACTION AGAINST YOU.
....
....
BUT *NOW* YOU'VE ATTACKED THE *SHŌGUN'S* GOLD CARAVAN!
YOU'VE *SLAUGHTERED* MY MEN! WE CAN'T STAND IDLY BY!

ŌGAMI-SAMA!
YOU'VE MADE ENEMIES OF THE KUROKUWA!
SO BE IT.

I'LL ASK ONE THING..
AS AN ASSASSIN, YOU COULD HAVE ONLY KILLED KUZEYAMASHIRO-NO-KAMI.
WHY MY MEN...?


KANJŌ!
THAT SHOULD EXPLAIN IT

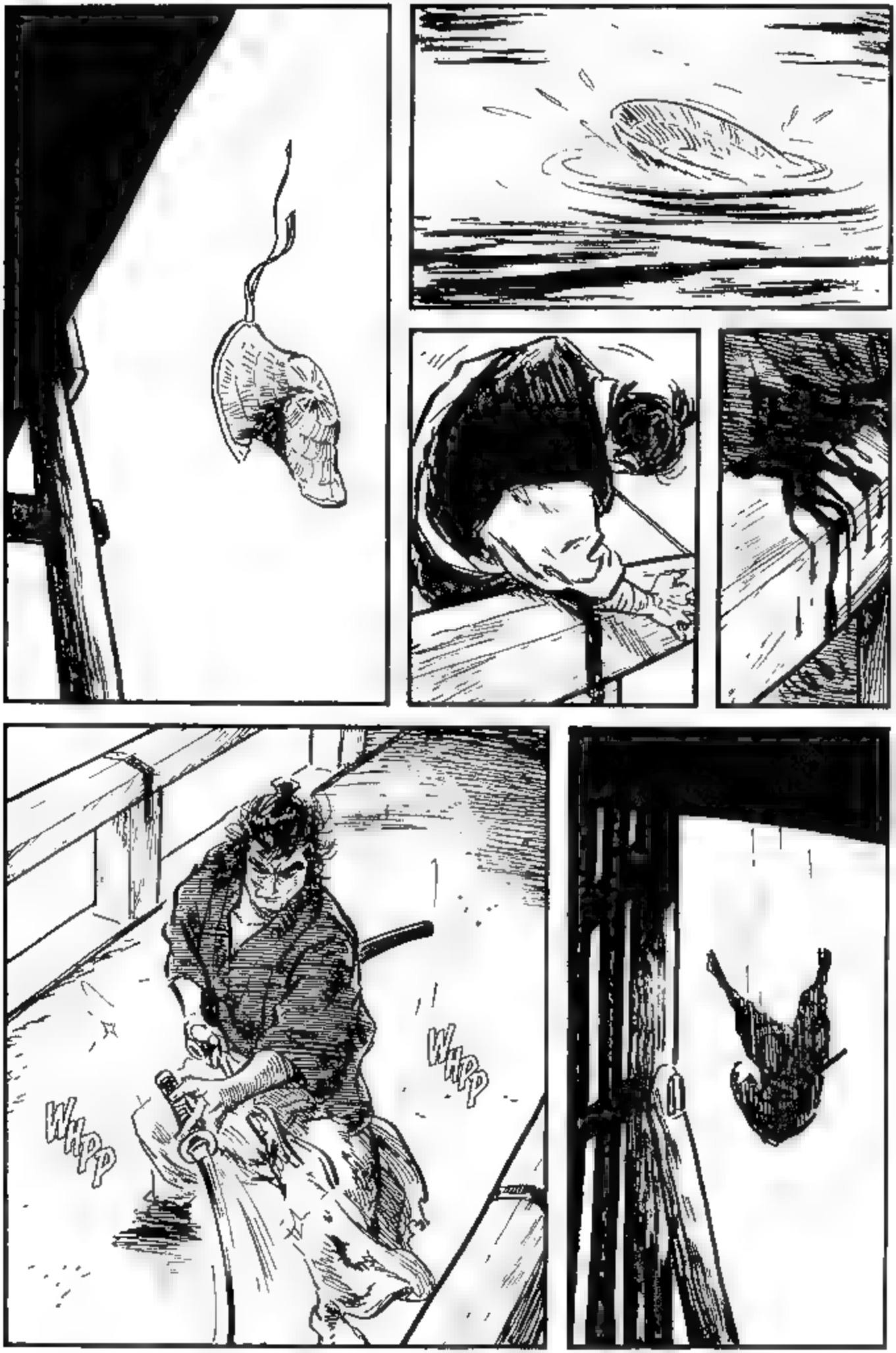
TO AN ASSASSIN, ALL HEADS ARE THE SAME!
....
....

I SEE.
KILL HIM!!
HYAHH!!
SHASH
SHOK

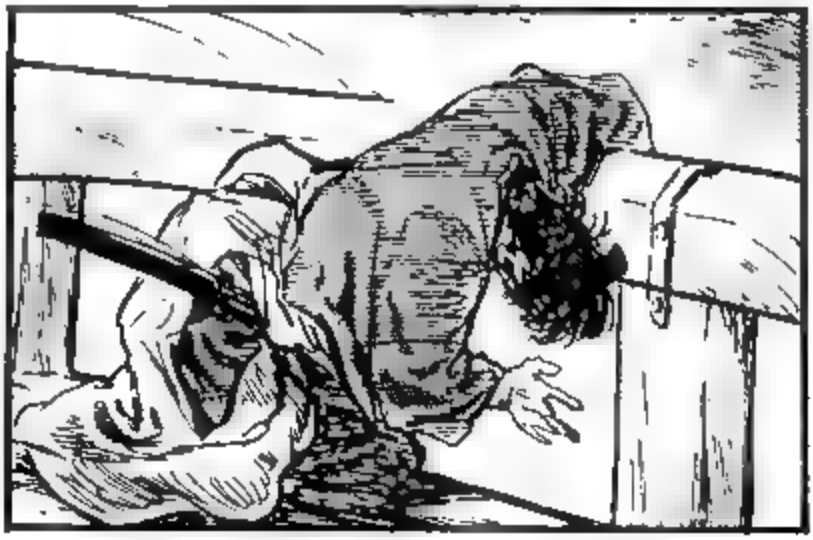
FWSSH

FSSHT

SKUSSH


WHIPP
WHIPP

Ah
SHOOSH



PAPA!

I DON'T WANT *NOTHING* TO DO WITH HIM! HE'S THE *DEVIL!*
BUT, BUT STILL.. THIS MAN...
TO DO ALL THAT, WITH THIS FEVER...

FWDD
HEAL HIM! WHATEVER IT TAKES!
ALL. . ALL THIS MONEY ..?
ALL RIGHT I. .I'LL DO MY BEST
DARLING ..?
TH-THIS LITTLE BOY .
...DO YOU THINK HE'S SEEN SUCH HORRIBLE SLAUGHTER BEFORE?
JUDGING FROM HOW HE ACTS...I FEAR SO.
YOU POOR THING...

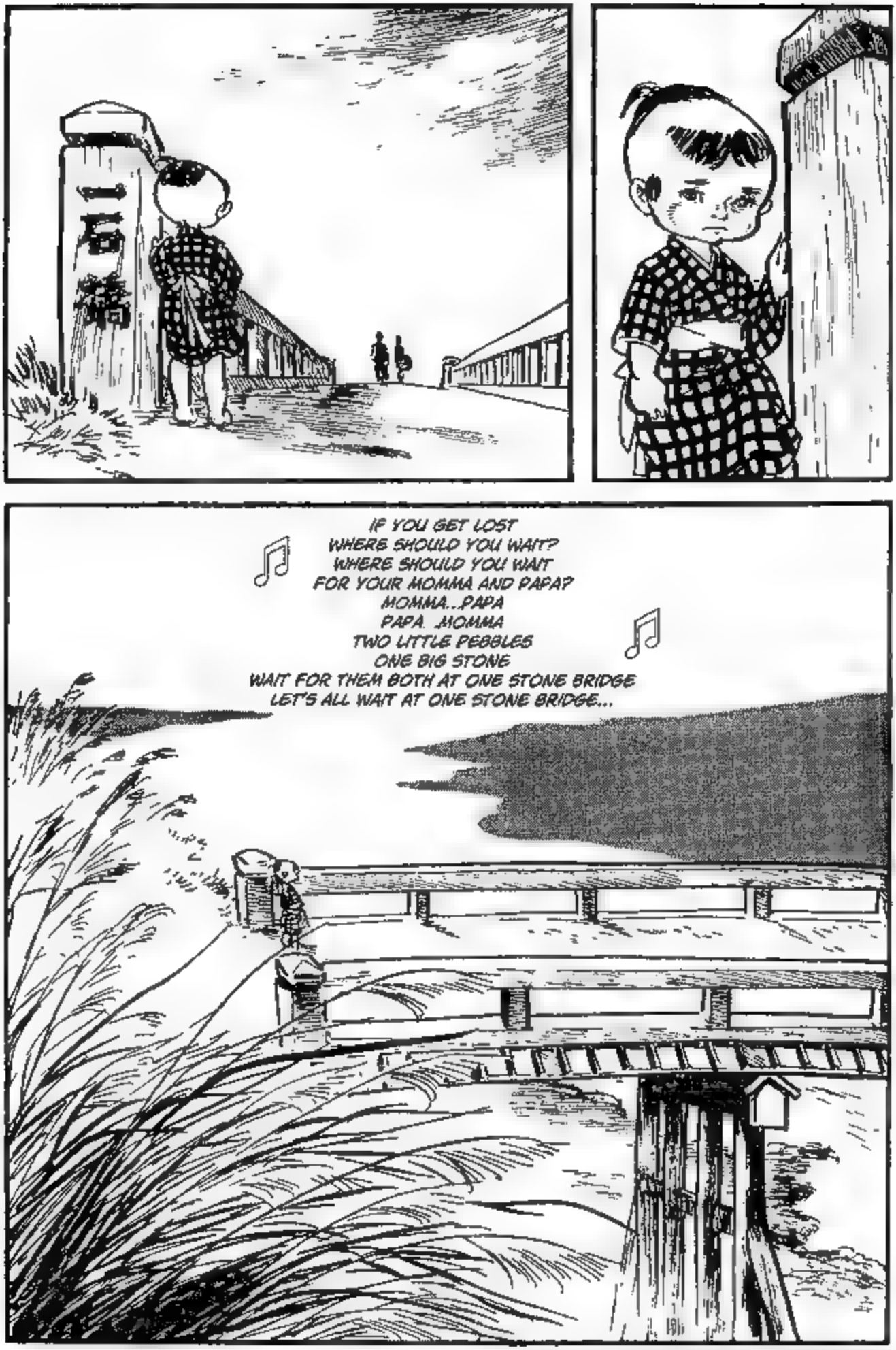
WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL *HAPPEN* TO HIM?
THEY CALLED HIS FATHER AN *ASSASSIN* IF SO
THIS CHILD'S FUTURE HOLDS ONLY *DEATH*
THAT'S *AWFUL*... SO *AWFUL* AND HE LOOKS SO MUCH LIKE OUR OWN *NAMI-NOSUKE* DID WHEN HE DIED
I CAN'T LET HIM GO
I *WON'T* LET HIM GO!
SHIFT
. . . .
. . . .
AS LONG AS HE'S WITH HIS FATHER, THIS BOY'S FUTURE IS *HOPELESS!*
SURELY EVEN HIS *FATHER* ONLY DRAGS HIM ALONG BECAUSE HE *HAS* TO... IN HIS HEART HE MUST *PRAY* FOR HIS SON'S HAPPINESS.

IF...IF ONLY WE COULD RAISE HIM AS OUR OWN.
THEN THIS BOY...AND HIS FATHER, TOO.
ISN'T THAT SO...? WOULDN'T THAT BE THE BEST FOR EVERYONE?
MM...
YES! OF COURSE!! THIS IS ONE STONE BRIDGE! THINK OF THE SONG— THE GODS AND BUDDHA MUST HAVE PLANNED IT THIS WAY!
A CHILDLESS COUPLE A CHILD IN NEED...
CAN THIS BE CHANCE?!
IF THIS GENTLEMAN SHOULD MEET AN UNTIMELY END HERE, THEN OF COURSE WE'LL RAISE HIS CHILD
BUT THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO WHILE H.S LIFE HANGS IN BALANCE.. FOR NOW, WE CAN ONLY PRAY FOR H.S RECOVERY
AFTER THAT, I WILL ASK HIM IF WE CAN ADOPT HIS BOY
THANK YOU DARLING!

WHAT IS HE...?
HE'S TRYING TO FISH...!
I DOUBT HE CAN EVEN SEE H.S LINE...
..BUT HE'S DESPERATE.. DESPERATE TO SAVE HIS FATHER

EVEN WITH A DOCTOR. .EVEN WITH *US* HERE. .HE DOESN'T COUNT ON *ANYONE*.
WITH HIS *OWN* HANDS. HIS *OWN* STRENGTH...HE'S FIGHTING FOR HIS FATHER
OOH!! :SNIFF:
THAT'S NO *NORMAL* CHILD. HIS FATHER SPOKE OF *MEIFUMADŌ*... AND TRULY, THEY'RE BOUND BY SOMETHING STRONGER THAN BLOOD.
IF HIS FATHER PERISHES, THAT'S ANOTHER STORY BUT IF HE LIVES...WE MUST LET THEM BE, SAYO
TEARING THEM APART WOULD ONLY HURT HIM MORE.
SIR...? HE'S OVER THE WORST OF IT THE CYCLE OF FEVER IS BROKEN, AND HE'LL BE FINE IN TIME. BUT .I SWEAR I'VE *NEVER* SEEN ANYONE SO TOUGH IN ALL MY DAYS!
. . . .
. . . .

SNIFF
NO .IT'S BETTER THIS WAY, SAYO.
JUST LOOK AT THAT SMILE. IT SAYS IT ALL.


IF YOU GET LOST
WHERE SHOULD YOU WAIT?
WHERE SHOULD YOU WAIT
FOR YOUR MOMMA AND PAPA?
MOMMA...PAPA
PAPA...MOMMA
TWO LITTLE PEBBLES
ONE BIG STONE
WAIT FOR THEM BOTH AT ONE STONE BRIDGE
LET'S ALL WAIT AT ONE STONE BRIDGE...

LONE WOLF AND CUB BOOK SIX: THE END
TO BE CONTINUED

GLOSSARY

currency

bu – A small coin, worth 1/4th of a *ryō*.
mon – A copper coin.
kan – A bundle of 1,000 *mon*
monme – A silver piece
ryō – A gold piece, worth 60 *monme* or 4 *kan*
shu – Edo-period coin. Worth 1/16th of a *ryō*

deiri

A fight between rival *yakuza* gangs

dōtanuki

A battle sword. Literally, "sword that cuts through torsos."

Edo

The capital of medieval Japan and the seat of the shōgunate. The site of modern-day Tokyo

go-inkyo

A wealthy, retired gentleman. (*"Go"* is an honorific.)

han

A feudal domain

honorifics

Japan is a class and status society, and proper forms of address are critical. Common markers of respect are the prefixes *o* and *go*, and a wide range of suffixes. Some of the suffixes you will encounter in *Lone Wolf and Cub*:
chan – for children, young women, and close friends
dono – archaic; used for higher-ranked or highly respected figures
sama – used for superiors
san – the most common, used among equals or near-equals
sensei – used for teachers, masters, respected entertainers, and politicians

ikki

A peasant revolt. Japan's downtrodden peasants had almost no recourse in the Edo period. Peasants could travel to Edo to petition the government for relief, but the emissaries and their families would be put to death for their insolence, even when their pleas were accepted. No wonder then that the peasants frequently took matters into their own hands.

jin

Five *shaku*. Approximately 1.7 yards.

jingi

The traditional world of the *yakuza* was bounded by elaborate codes of behavior and duty. Improper greetings, rude speech, and other violations of the code could escalate into bloody feuds

jizō
Folk expression of Kshitigarbha, a *bodhisattva* comforting the common man. Over time, the rough-hewn *jizō* figures came to be worshipped as guardian saints of travelers, children, women, and the weak and ailing.

jō
Ten *shaku*. Approximately 3.3 yards

jōdai
Castle warden. The ranking *han* official in charge of a *daimyō's* castle when the *daimyo* was spending his obligatory years in Edo.

johakyū
The fundamental rhythm of Japanese music, composition, and performance art. A sustained buildup, a heightened pause, and a rapid rush to denouement.

kōgi go-yō
The shogun's business.

kōgi kaishakunin
The shogun's own second, who performed executions ordered by the shōgun.

koku
A bale of rice. The traditional measure of a *han's* wealth, a measure of its agricultural land and productivity.

kyōjō-mochi
To have a murder rap. *Yakuza* often cooperated with the local authorities during the Edo period in keeping the peace, but when they committed a serious crime like murder, they were expected to pack up and leave town until the dust settled. They traveled with their faces covered by wide hats.

manji
The Buddhist symbol of prosperity and good fortune, the *svastika* in Sanskrit. The clockwise "swastika," a solar symbol in many mystic traditions, was adopted by the Nazi regime as the "hakenkreuz." The Japanese Buddhist tradition, however, uses the "sauvastika," or counter-clockwise sign, dating back more than a thousand years. Here it is seen alongside the *dōchūjin* trail marker for "encampment."

meifumadō
The Buddhist Hell. The way of demons and damnation.

metsuke
Inspector. A post combining the functions of chief of police and chief intelligence officer.

mudra
A sign representing one of the virtues of the Buddha, frequently found in Buddhist art.

Nagashi-tōrō
In this traditional festival, tōrō mounted on small boats are released in rivers, carrying the souls of the dead.

oyabun
Literally, "father status," the boss of a *yakuza* gang. His underlings were known as *kobun*, or children.

rōnin
A masterless samurai. Literally, "one adrift on the waves." Members of the samurai caste who have lost their masters through the dissolution of *han*, expulsion for misbehavior, or other reasons Prohibited from working as farmers or merchants under the strict Confucian caste system imposed by the Tokugawa shōgunate, many impoverished *rōnin* became "hired guns" for whom the code of the samurai was nothing but empty words

sakazuki
A *sake* cup. As part of the traditional initiation rites into a *yakuza* gang, a *kobun* accepts a drink from the *oyabun*, and keeps the cup as a sign of loyalty

sanshita
Lowest rank of *yakuza*

"shikii-uchi gomen kōmurimasu"
"We beg your pardon for intruding upon your house." *Yakuza* had distinctive speech patterns that further separated them from the general population.

suemono-giri
Cutting through a stationary object.

tono
Lord, *daimyō*. Sometimes used as a form of address, as in *tono-sama*

tōrō
Lanterns. The *mandō* lanterns are simple constructions of wood and paper for festivals

wakadoshiyori
Junior councilors. The Tokugawa shogunate was a hybrid government, both a national government empowered by the emperor to govern the nation as a whole, and a *daimyō* government like that of any *han*, concerned with protecting the interests of the Tokugawa clan itself. The council of *wakadoshiyori* junior councilors was the highest advisory body to the shōgun on matters affecting the clan, rather than the nation as a whole

yakuza
Japan's criminal syndicates In the Edo period, *yakuza* were a common part of the landscape, running houses of gambling and prostitution. As long as they did not overstep their bounds, they were tolerated by the authorities, a tradition little changed in modern Japan.

KAZUO KOIKE

Though widely respected as a powerful writer of graphic fiction, Kazuo Koike has spent a lifetime reaching beyond the bounds of the comics medium. Aside from co-creating and writing the successful *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Crying Freeman* manga, Koike has hosted television programs; founded a golf magazine; produced movies; written popular fiction, poetry, and screenplays; and mentored some of Japan's best manga talent.

Lone Wolf and Cub was first serialized in Japan in 1970 (under the title *Kozure Okami)* in *Manga Action* magazine and continued its hugely popular run for many years, being collected as the stories were published, and reprinted worldwide. Koike collected numerous awards for his work on the series throughout the next decade. Starting in 1972, Koike adapted the popular manga into a series of six films, the *Baby Cart Assassin* saga, garnering widespread commercial success and critical acclaim for his screenwriting.

This wasn't Koike's only foray into film and video. In 1996, Crying Freeman, the manga Koike created with artist Ryoichi Ikegami, was produced in Hollywood and released to commercial success in Europe and is currently awaiting release in America.

And to give something back to the medium that gave him so much, Koike started the *Gekiga Sonjuku*, a college course aimed at helping talented writers and artists — such as *Ranma 1/2* creator Rumiko Takahashi — break into the comics field.

The driving focus of Koike's narrative is character development, and his commitment to character is clear: "Comics are carried by characters. If a character is well created, the comic becomes a hit." Kazuo Koike's continued success in comics and literature has proven this philosophy true.

GOSEKI KOJIMA

Goseki Kojima was born on November 3, 1928, the very same day as the godfather of Japanese comics, Osamu Tezuka. While just out of junior high school, the self-taught Kojima began painting advertising posters for movie theaters to pay his bills.

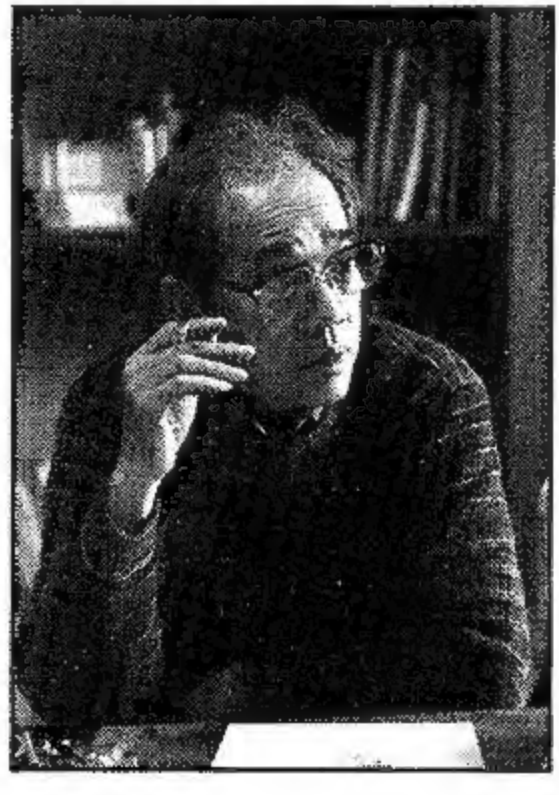
In 1950, Kojima moved to Tokyo, where the postwar devastation had given rise to special manga forms for audiences too poor to buy the new manga magazines. Kojima created art for *kami-shibai*, or "paper-play" narrators, who would use manga story sheets to present narrated street plays. Kojima moved on to creating works for the *kashi-bon* market, bookstores that rented out books, magazines, and manga to mostly low-income readers. He soon became highly popular among *kashi-bon* readers.

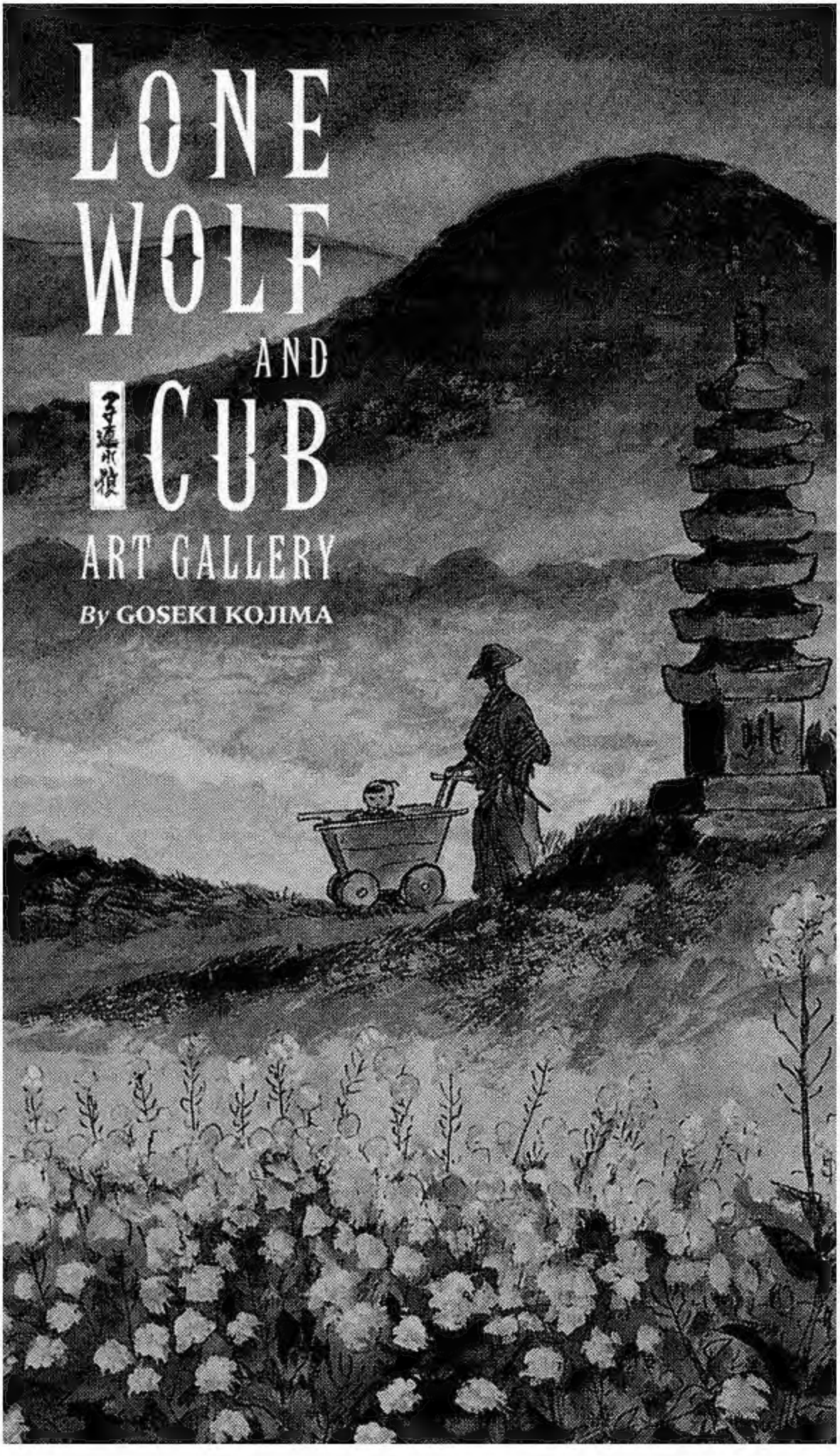
In 1967, Kojima broke into the magazine market with his series *Dojinki*. As the manga magazine market grew and diversified, he turned out a steady stream of popular series.

In 1970, in collaboration with Kazuo Koike, Kojima began the work that would seal his reputation, *Kozure Okami* (*Lone Wolf and Cub*). Before long the story had become a gigantic hit, eventually spinning off a television series, six motion pictures, and even theme song records. Koike and Kojima were soon dubbed the "golden duo" and produced success after success on their way to the pinnacle of the manga world.

When *Manga Japan* magazine was launched in 1994, Kojima was asked to serve as consultant, and he helped train the next generation of manga artists.

In his final years, Kojima turned to creating original graphic novels based on the movies of his favorite director, Akira Kurosawa. Kojima passed away on January 5, 2000 at the age of 71.

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